

July  
1994

# INTERREGNUM

# 4



*fantasy roleplaying and more*

# INTERREGNUM

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#4

*An Amateur Press Association  
covering fantasy roleplaying games  
and anything that interests those who play them.*

Peter Maranci, ed.

Topic: "Technology"

July 1994

Interregnum is an Amateur Press Association, comprised of zines written by individual contributors and mailed to the editor. It is collated and published approximately twelve times per year. New contributors and subscribers are always welcome.

A subscription costs \$1.00 per issue plus the actual cost of the selected method of mailing. Subscribers may open an account from which these costs are deducted by mailing a check or money order in US funds, payable to Peter Maranci, at the following address:

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Since Interregnum is an amateur production, it is necessary for contributors to help cover the costs of production: \$1 per single-sided master page mailed in. Alternatively, contributors may mail 200 good double-sided copies of their zine to the editor. The only additional cost to contributors is the price of the postage to mail their issue to them.

All zines sent in for publication in Interregnum should be copyrighted by the author. Copyright may be asserted by the use of the following phrase:

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Sample issues of Interregnum are available at \$3 each for US addresses, and \$4 in US funds for foreign/overseas mailing.

Many trademarked products are discussed in Interregnum. No challenge to the holders of these trademarks is intended.

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## publication schedule:

- ⇒ The deadline for inclusion in Interregnum #5 is August 3rd. The deadline for Interregnum #6 is September 3rd.
- ⇒ The topic for Interregnum #5 is *Human Nature*. The daily news shows that people seem capable of limitless cruelty. But they can also be heroic, self-sacrificing, even noble. Why is this so? How does the question of human nature fit into roleplaying, if at all? After all, roleplaying is a human activity.

Okay, it's a heavy question. Next month, something trivial. ☺

→Pete

W

ith this issue Interregnnum is undergoing a major transformation. For previous issues copies were made at a local cheap copy shop at a cost of three cents per page-side. As of this issue, however, I can get copies at the cost of the paper alone: approximately half a cent per sheet.

Therefore, the cost for contributors is now cut from \$2 per single-sided master page to \$1, and the cost for subscribers is being reduced from \$2 per issue plus postage to \$1 plus postage. In addition, the copy count is rising to 200. Many of these will be promotional copies, to be distributed at game shops and conventions.

I must emphasize here that I cannot guarantee that this "sweetheart" printing deal will last indefinitely. It should hold for at least the next five or six issues, but beyond that point it's impossible to be sure. Should the deal lapse, it will be necessary to reduce or eliminate the production of promotional issues, and return to the previous rate of \$2 per zine page/\$2 per issue (plus postage). Of course, that price is still very competitive with other roleplaying APAs.

Also beginning with this issue Interregnnum will be more widely distributed. A number of kindly volunteers will be leaving stacks of Interregnnum #4 in salubrious places. These new areas of distribution may include Canada and the United Kingdom, if events go as planned.

Any suggestions as to likely spots for promotional issues would be most welcome. Among the possibilities I've considered are college and university game or science-fiction clubs, various roleplaying organizations, science-fiction specialty stores, and perhaps comics shops.

I'd be remiss if I failed to thank Lois Folstein for coming up with a short and appropriate acronym for Interregnnum: IR. The Wild Hunt is TWH, and Alarums and Excursions is A&E; now Interregnnum has a short set of initials, too. What's more, IR is appropriate to the Latin roots of the title. It's purely coincidental that IR is shorter and easier to type than the other APA initials. 8^>}

A number of folk have commented to me about comments. Truth to tell, that subject has been on my mind for some time. The expanded distribution of Interregnnum makes consideration of this point all the more important.

From now on the readership of Interregnnum will far outnumber the contributors. While comments are valuable both as feedback and as acknowledgement, it's important to make those comments meaningful and interesting to readers if at all possible. A magazine in which 15% or more of the contents are incomprehensible to a new reader is not likely to increase in circulation much, if at all.

What can be done to make comments interesting?

I'm open to suggestions. Some possibilities:

Comments should be properly referenced if possible, giving enough context so that those who haven't read the previous issue will understand them.

If a comment on a subject becomes *very* long, perhaps it would be better to expand it into an article in the main body of the zine.

I had better acknowledge here that my own comments often fall short of this ideal. 8^>}

I've begun the creation of a glossary of terms for Interregnnum, again with an eye to making the magazine more understandable for newcomers and even non-gamers. Any suggestions for the glossary will be gratefully received.

Until next time,

—>Pete

# The Interregnum FAQsheet

Interregnum is an Amateur Press Association comprised of individual zines written and formatted by various authors and mailed to the editor for collation, reproduction, and binding. The primary focus is roleplaying games, fantasy, and science fiction, but diversity is valued—authors may write about anything they wish. Interregnum is written by mature gamers who necessarily have other subjects of interest beyond roleplaying games. It is hoped that the inclusion of such subjects will produce interesting insights into the roleplaying hobby.

**Subscriptions:** There is no fixed subscription period. Subscribers should mail a check or money order in US funds payable to Peter Maranci to establish an account; as issues are mailed the cost of the issue and the postage used to mail it will be deducted from the account. When the account gets low the amount will be noted on the mailing envelope. At that point the subscriber may send more money to continue receiving issues, put their account on hold until some future time, or have the balance returned (at the editor's option, a final issue may be mailed instead to close out accounts in which the balance is less than the cost of one issue).

The usual cost per issue is \$2 plus postage. Due to unusual circumstances the cost has been lowered to \$1 per issue plus postage. Please note that when the special deal lapses we will return to the original rate.

**Postage:** Within the United States 1st class mail for the average issue of Interregnum costs \$1.67, while book rate (4th class) costs \$1.05. Subscribers may choose which method of mailing they prefer. Overseas subscribers may choose any method of mailing available from the US Postal Service.

**Writing for Interregnum:** Anyone is welcome to write for IR. Since Interregnum is an amateur publication, not for profit, contributors help defray the cost of photocopying their zines. The cost is normally \$2 per single-sided page. However, the special circumstances noted above have made it possible to reduce the cost to \$1 per page. Contributors are not charged for a copy of the issue they write in—their only additional cost is postage.

Alternatively contributors may mail in 200 copies of their zine, printed double-sided to reduce mailing costs. Zines mailed via UPS or any other private delivery service

**Format:** Zines must be clean and sharp enough to photocopy well. Desktop publishing is not required; zines may be typed, or even handwritten. Margins should be at least 1/2 inch wide on the top, bottom, and outer edges; a one-inch margin should be used for the binding edge (the left side for odd-numbered pages, right side for even-numbered pages). Internal art enhances readability and is always appreciated, as are multiple columns and subheads.

**Content:** Contributors are free to write as they wish, almost totally free of editorial oversight. I ask only that nothing be included which could lead to legal difficulties; please keep in mind that Interregnum is shipped across state lines and overseas, and is distributed in game stores which are open to all ages.

**Copyright:** All zines should be copyrighted by the author. Copyright may be asserted through the following phrase: Copyright (Your Name) (Date) or © (Your Name) (Date). (c) is not a valid designation.

Copyrighted and trademarked material is often discussed in Interregnum. Discussion of such material is not intended as a challenge to any copyright or trademark.

**Emailing Zines:** Zines in ASCII form may be emailed to the editor via the InterNet for DTP formatting, or sent in on 3.5" or 5.25" DOS-compatible floppy disks. Since time is limited (and becomes tighter as collation looms), ASCII zines sent in for layout should arrive at least four days before the deadline for printed zines. I'll attempt to capture the style of the contributor, if I have a sample of previous work and enough time. I can also accept files created with Publish-It for DOS or Windows or PostScript files on 3.5 or 5.25" disks.

Email/disk contributors may choose to have their zines laser-printed; in that case the cost of the printing will be charged to their account (\$0.50 per page plus the cost of rental time if necessary—not more than a total of \$1 per page). Alternatively zines can be printed on a 24-pin dot matrix printer at no additional charge.

**Letters to the Editor** will be gladly received, and printed in the editorial section. No letter will be published, however, that is marked as not for publication.

**Back Issues:** Back issues are available while supplies last. Issues #1-3 cost \$2 each in US funds, plus the cost of postage. Some savings may be realized by shipping several issues at once.

**Net Connection:** An InterNet alias has been set up which allows correspondents to receive information and updates about the status of Interregnum. Anyone who would like to be on that list should send email to maranci@max.tiac.net and include a valid InterNet address.

## **Glossary:**

RPG: Role Playing Game

IR: Interregnum. You're soaking in it.

TWH: The Wild Hunt, an old and respected APA based in the Greater Boston area. A number of Interregnum contributors have written for TWH, or still do.

A&E: Alarums and Excursions, a slightly older APA based on the West Coast.

RQ: RuneQuest™, a roleplaying system played by a number of contributors to Interregnum.

AD&D™: Advanced Dungeons & Dragons™, a roleplaying system

LARP or LRP: Live Action Role Playing (game); a generic term

PBEM: Play By Email

BTW: By The Way

IMHO: In My Humble Opinion

RAEBNC: Read And Enjoyed But No Comment. An acronym commonly used by procrastinating contributors. 8^>}

CD-ROM: Compact Disk, Read Only Memory. Laser disks for computer which hold huge amounts of data. Many high-quality computer games are released on CD-ROM.

:): a smile, indicating that the text preceding is not to be taken entirely seriously

8^>}: The cynical smile of a bearded, bespectacled editor

# LOG THIS!

#4

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I approach my computer with fear and trembling. Too often in past months it has crashed at the last moment, with the Interregnum deadline ominously close. Technology, it seems, is a two-edged sword.

## TOPIC #4: TECHNOLOGY

One aspect of technology which is often downplayed in roleplaying games is its unreliability. In most roleplaying games technological objects work as they are supposed to; the chances of failure are low, if they are considered at all. Yet the fact remains that machinery does fail, in some cases very frequently. Car, computers, copy machines; all break down, often at the most inopportune moment. And that's just the C's.

Service and repair are a major part of modern industrial economy. Yet game designers almost always eliminate these elements from their game worlds and systems. Why?

Perhaps technology maintenance is simply not a very interesting subject for a roleplaying game. I can believe that, but must admit that I'd like to see someone attempt to include maintenance and repair in a RPG. Though now that I think of it, **Paranoia** does feature unreliable

technology—in a starring role, no less. Still, a serious treatment would be most interesting.

Of course, issues of reliability aren't limited to science fiction settings. Low-tech games possess technology as well, though not in as pivotal a role as (for example) Traveller. In skill-based games such as RuneQuest some notice is taken of these possibilities; swords can break, armor can fail. Most level-based systems ignore the issue of technology failure, however.

## SHATTERED BITS AND PIECES

About ten years ago I was persuaded to enter a Generic Dungeon Module Contest that was being held by an unknown company called MattMark. Contestants paid \$5 for a contest booklet which was also an entry form. "Dungeons" could be entered in either of two categories. One category was for out-and-out dungeons, not my primary area of interest. The other category was much more appealing, seemingly slanted towards the "linked scenario pack" style of game supplement. I chose the latter. The prize was to be \$500 and publication of the module.



The Contest rules were quite grueling: an enormous "blueprint" was provided. Twenty-five percent of the entry score was based on faithfulness to this blueprint.

Unfortunately, the MattMark author was less than competent; the blueprint consisted of many pages of poorly-written first-person narrative, both difficult and embarrassing to read.

Moreover, the author seemed compelled to overload the blueprint with an abundance of stupid-sounding names, cryptic plot points, irrelevant legends—everything but the kitchen sink. Laid out in manuscript form, the blueprint alone probably ran to more than 25 pages. Yet contestants were allowed only 60 pages per module.

This made designing the module a daunting task indeed, and encouraged poor writing. Since entries were to be judged on faithfulness to the blueprint, it was inevitable that the vast majority of details could at best be listed as boring and irrelevant history. I suspect that the contest designer really wanted to design a module himself rather than hold a contest. He was deeply and humbly in love with his own words. 8^>}

The full story of the MattMark disaster was detailed years ago in The Wild Hunt APA; no point in going over it again. Suffice it to say that when all was said and done the Contest was cancelled due to embezzlement, leaving me with a totally unsalable work. The problem was not that the module was packed with names and details that were copyrighted by MattMark; that could be overcome with some minor rewriting. No, the real problem was that I'd tried to include as much as possible of the blueprint in my work and so had a scenario pack that was warped and twisted, full to bursting with irrelevant details and unnecessary explanation. Worst of all, the overarching plot was forced and awkward. All in all, the module wasn't worth the work it would take to put it into shape.

And there it sat, for many years.

But I prefer not to let anything go to waste. Recently it struck me that there were many

elements in the work which were interesting, worth expanding and printing elsewhere. The following scenario hooks are rewritten encounters from the usable remnant. Other sections (slightly rewritten) will appear in forthcoming issues.



1) **The Conjuror.** The party encounters a wandering conjuror, driving a small one-horse wagon on the road. Lacking any sort of magical ability, he entertains for a living with clever tricks and snappy patter. In his wagon are a number of odd objects: metal rings, folding boxes, wooden tubes, large square metal blades, collapsible canes, packets of colored powders, hollow tubes, manacles, costume swords and daggers, mirrors, a gaily painted tarpaulin with ropes and hooks, a formal black outfit including a cape, assorted metal trinkets of all kinds, and cages holding snakes, rabbits, and doves.

**Hook:** Almost no one realizes how extremely useful the contents of a magician's closet can be. Hollow tubes can be used for breathing underwater, or blowing powders or darts. Ropes and hooks can be used to climb walls, or descend into pits. A black outfit is perfect for secret night activities. Weapons and manacles have obvious uses. Any detailed description of the tools of the ninja will reveal many more such devices. An ordinary traveller carrying such goods might be suspect, subject to interrogation and delay; a

conjuror has a perfectly good excuse to carry all sorts of odd items, and is less likely to receive unwelcome attention than a true magic-user.

The conjurer is a spy. Among his doves are several homing pigeons; he uses these to send reports back to his employers. At night, he puts on his black suit and searches high and low for information. Should he come to suspect that the player characters possess knowledge about something he's interested in, they may find themselves with a new and amusing companion—at least for a little while.

**2) THE ICE BARBARIAN** A wandering Ice Barbarian from the frozen North. He is a large, bearded man with a huge ice-axe and armor crafted from white fur. His people are unusual; they are comfortable in extreme cold, but are quickly overcome by temperate-zone heat. Around his neck he wears an amulet which enables him to endure the (to him) intolerable heat of the South. The Ice Amulet is an unusual and powerful magic item: whoever wears it is chilled to a temperature just above freezing. If the amulet is placed in a liquid, that liquid will freeze in a few minutes at most.

The Ice barbarian is a poet; his people, though limited in technology, are gentle and highly civilized. He is travelling in search of his wife, who was captured by a group of hunters who sold her to slavers that he is tracking. He will be most grateful for any help offered, though he has little money. Anyone helping him rescue his wife will be certain to be honored among the Northern tribes, at the least, and poems will certainly be made in their honor.

If hindered, he will try to avoid conflict. He is a strong and sturdy warrior, though not of the first rank of ability. He has no magic, but if attacked and killed he can curse those who slay him. The Curse cannot be avoided, and has the effect of making the recipient feel a steadily deepening chill which cannot be negated

through normal means. The victim eventually becomes almost totally incapacitated, shivering and shaking uncontrollably. The curse can only be abated by travelling north to his tribe (an arduous task in itself) and performing a penance selected by the tribal shaman.



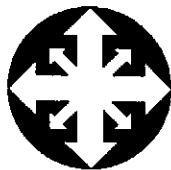
**3) THE BEARS and THE Wild Boy.** While travelling in a somewhat wild region, the characters hear shrill screams, and animal-like growling. Characters with some knowledge of animals may recognize the growls as those of bears. Over a small hill two brown bears are savaging a small and filthy child, who is the source of the screams.

The child is clothed in scraps of furs, and is mute: he is wild (much like of the Feral Kid in The Road Warrior/Mad Max 2). So far, the bears have only scratched him on the head and chest; if the party does nothing, the bears kill the boy in a few minutes. If the party rescues and heals him, the boy scurries to a nearby cave and brings out a handful of stones. He gratefully gives shiny pebbles to every party member. One of the stones may be recognized (with difficulty) as an ancient and weathered seal. The stone itself is slightly valuable, but to a historian the seal would be worth a considerable amount of money.

When (or if) the party tries to leave, they will find that the boy insists on following them. He is a skilled woodsman; they will find it difficult to get away from him. However, the sight of a feral boy following the party around should certainly cause some interesting reactions in civilized areas...

4) **The Duelling Nobles.** Two nobles from a neighboring country have marked off a section of the road and are dueling to the death. The party must go off the road to avoid them. They are both furious and do not want to talk to strangers. If the party irritates them (by asking about their dispute, for example), both turn and assault the party. One is in slightly heavier armor than the other, but is slower. Should the party somehow find itself in the position of examining their bodies, they will discover that the more lightly-armored noble has a fairly large sum of money upon him, while the other has none.

5) **THE STREAM.** The path is crossed by a rushing stream; the party must jump or get wet crossing it. There are many large purple blossoms floating along in the stream. The flowers signify nothing at all—a flowering bush overhangs the water far upstream, out of sight.



© REVIEW ©  
**DRAGON'S LAIR**

A CD-ROM game for IBM-type machines by Readysoft, Inc.

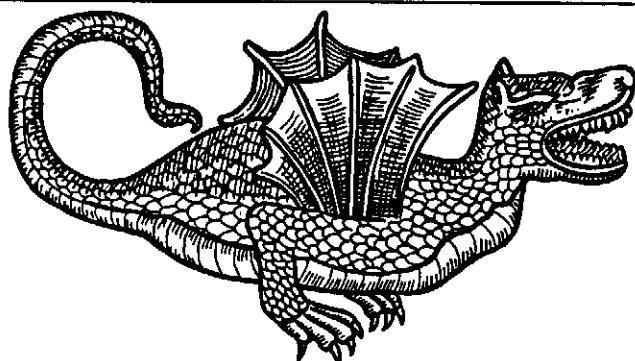
I'm not much for computer games. Most of them seem a waste of time, nothing more than endless dreary variants of the standard

shoot-'em-up paradigm. When I was a kid, games were better.

One of my favorite video games of long ago was an odd one: Dragon's Lair. For those who haven't seen it, imagine a well-animated cartoon about a slightly clumsy fantasy hero named Dirk the Daring, questing through a cursed castle to rescue a beautiful princess. Then imagine the cartoon put on a laser disk and hooked to a joystick and a button. If the proper moves—left, right, up (forward), down (back), or sword—are done in the correct order and at the correct time, the rescue of the princess takes place smoothly. Make the wrong move, or the right move at the wrong time, and a different sequence plays: Dirk's agonizing death. The death scenes are customized to the method of demise, and are themselves quite amusing.

Attach a coin box to the machine, allow players to pay to continue the game when their lives are gone, and you have an instant money-maker. I'd hate to admit how much I spent on that game, but toward the end I could win it without losing a single life—and did, quite a few times.

When I picked up my first PC, one of the first games I bought was Dragon's Lair on floppy disks. It was dirt cheap, and played that way—unbearably crude graphics, terrible sound, and one of the slowest reaction times I've ever seen in a game. To cap it off, the game would freeze the system solid after about a minute of play.



It seemed to be fate when Dragon's Lair came out for CD-ROM soon after I bought a multimedia machine; call me a fool, but I bought the game again. At about \$50, it wasn't cheap. Still, the pictures on the box seemed to promise a game that would be truer to the original.

It is, in spades.

The animation seems to be taken from the original material—if not, it's an indistinguishable reproduction. The quality is excellent, at least on my 15" .28 pitch NI SVGA screen; there's a slight jaggedness, but it's barely noticeable. Speed of play might be actually faster than on the laser disk. The game offers the option to play at 6 or 12 frames per second; on a 486 DX/2 50 mghz machine with a 256k cache and a double-speed CD-ROM 12 frames per second produced very smooth animation.

The sound is excellent too, which is fortunate because the sound was one of the most outstanding features of the original game. On a few occasions the soundtrack does seem a little wrong for the scene, however. Where certain action scenes were shortened, the soundtrack sometimes seems to have been left at the original length—so Dirk grunts and groans even when he's just walking. A minor detail.

Another problem with the sound is that when the game is paused and restarted, the picture and sound become rather noticeably out of synch. In fact, pausing seems to be a bit buggy, at least on my system; on several occasions the system would freeze up a few minutes after pausing.



The game itself has been shortened, of course. After all, there's no way that a little CD-ROM can hold as much as a big laser disk (though I suppose that they could have broken the game up onto two CD-ROMs and kept the whole thing—I wish they had). Scenes end quickly, and in long scenes some repetitious actions have been cut down. Though I'm sure that some scenes have been entirely omitted, there's only one that I

know is missing: a scene in which Dirk jumps into a circular room, only to have the floor plummet beneath him, elevator-style. If he fails to jump off at the right moment, he falls (screaming, of course) to his death. I know that that scene is missing because it's listed on the CD-ROM label. Must have been a last-minute screwup.

In a way, it's hard for me to judge this game impartially; when the fanfare ending a scene is cut short, it's finished in my memory. The game has been artfully cut in an almost impressionistic way; shortened elements give the impression of the original whole. I suspect that those who played the arcade version might get more out of the CD-ROM game than those who never saw the complete version.

The game plays very smoothly with a keyboard, though there is the option for a joystick. Since only four directions are used, keyboard control is the better choice. Timing is important, but not ridiculously so in most scenes. In some cases the number of moves has been reduced from the arcade version.

One obvious flaw has been necessarily retained from the arcade version: the game is single-track. Dirk makes the correct moves, or he dies; there is no in-between, no alternate choice of actions. Play the game successfully once, and you've pretty

much exhausted the possibilities (unless you decide to sample all the death scenes). Nonetheless, I've played the game a number of times since winning it. It's a very good cartoon, very funny and very well made. Don Bluth (the animator, and producer of such films as The Secret of NIMH and All Dogs Go to Heaven) did an outstanding job of tapping into the archetypal images of fantasy without getting too heavy. The Princess might be the only jarring note: she's definitely not G-rated. That costume! Combined with an almost comically seductive voice, it was a sure-fire supercharger for adolescent hormones. A brilliant way to keep those quarters flowing. 8^>}

There are a few other points worth noting.

The game does not have a "save" feature. It can be paused, but there's no way to store a half-played game. Given the bugs in the Pause feature, this is an unfortunate drawback.

Another odd thing about the game is the "customizing" option. When the game is first played it will offer the option of adapting the setup to your system requirements through some sort of auto-detection; this can take a variable amount of time, but in my case it took about an hour. Annoying, to put it mildly.

Overall, though, Dragon's Lair is fun, exciting, and plays well. I enthusiastically recommend it to anyone who enjoyed the arcade game, and strongly recommend it for everyone.

Rating: A-

One final note: at the end of the game a commercial plays, announcing the upcoming release of **Space Ace** on CD-ROM. Space Ace was also produced by Don Bluth, and was in

many ways as good a representation of the science fiction genre as Dragon's Lair is of fantasy. It was a most enjoyable game, and I'll certainly pick it up when it becomes available. Look for a review in an upcoming issue.

### COMMENTS #3

**Rich Staats:** It seems odd to comment on my own guest columnist, but I have to say it: that's some damn funny material. If you ever feel like doing a guest stint again, just say the word. I assume that Old Pete isn't based on anyone real? 8^>}

**Curtis Taylor:** Thanks for the additional Strangers In Prax errata. Avalon Hill should pay you a royalty! 8^>}

● By an odd coincidence, there's a bread factory a few blocks from my home, too. Smells delicious. I've heard that the smell of baking bread is caused by the evaporation of alcohol from the yeast, but I don't know if I believe it—alcohol has always smelled (and tasted) horrible to me.

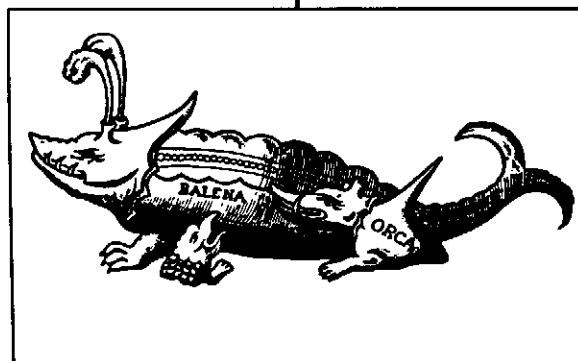
● Regarding the Illusionary Dungeon: a number of folk have made the same point. Yes, according to standard AD&D rules an illusion spell couldn't enable victims to march down into solid rock; even a *Wish* couldn't do it. But I was looking at the question from a dramatic viewpoint rather than a mechanistic one. If illusion (or anything else, for that matter) defined by rules becomes less interesting or dramatic, I feel that the rules should be changed. After all, rules are only necessary to the extent that they improve the roleplaying experience. Many players fail to realize that the rules are secondary to the fun.

Of course, I wasn't seriously proposing the use of the Illusionary Dungeon. Though maybe someday...8^>}

● Thanks for the Gloranthan hooks. Good stuff.

**Scott Ferrier:** The jackalope drawing is...um...pretty whacked. Is it native to South Dakota? 8^>)

● I'd forgotten quite a bit of the post-Holocaust campaign. It made interesting (and funny) reading.



● Regarding *Highlander*: if anyone ever Quickens Richie I doubt they'll start acting like Beavis and Butt-head. It's more likely they'll start whining and being incredibly stupid. Though as I've mentioned, it does seem that the *Highlander* writers have been giving him better lines lately. What is it about TV that requires so many shows to have one totally loathsome and irritating character? Wesley on *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, the Centauri ambassador on *Babylon 5*, Richie on *Highlander*...there must be a demon in Hollywood, forcing these twerpish characters into the public consciousness. 8^>)

● Re "Bar Wars", I'm not sure that a copy of the humorous version can be found. At the least, it's buried deep.

● Great Egyptian picture. It's funny (particularly since I gave that file to you), but I never noticed the anachronisms. Are those running shoes beneath the desk?

**George Phillies:** Good heavens, no Phillies fiction! I hope this isn't the start of a trend. Surely you could write a short story for every issue—how hard can it be? 8^>)

● Re Unchill, I can admit now that it is a bit unfocused—too much so. But the criticism of that writer's group didn't help me to see that. Quite the contrary; by putting me off of writing altogether it delayed my understanding. Truth to tell, I think the best practice I've had as a writer is writing zines for APAs.

● Thanks for the reprint of the Canadian Censorship of RPGs announcement. I have to wonder if this is yet another exaggeration, however. Bans and such have been predicted in the US for years, but I haven't heard of any laws being passed. I have a hard time believing that our eminently sane and tolerant neighbors to the North would actually put into practice anything as silly as a ban on games.

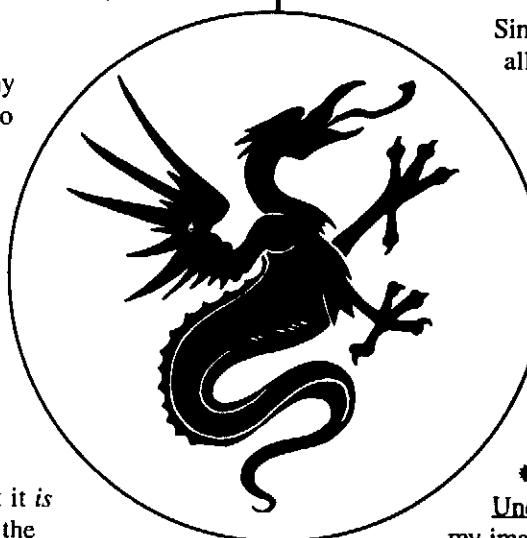
**David Hoberman:** You do a wonderful layout on your zine, David. And I must admit that the contiguous column style is more readable than the "continued on page x" format.

● Of course I strongly agree with your preference for systemless game writing. Though I've written my own share of RuneQuest-specific articles I find generic

material more useful. After all, I haven't run or played in RuneQuest for a very long time.

● Have you given any thought to publishing selections from your PBEM?

● Re The Grey Company scenario, possibly my description of the fate of the Elder Members was unclear: their bodies were trapped in amber blocks of force in a deep cavern complex, guarded by an entire race of darkness-dwellers. Embarked on a strange sort of spiritual HeroQuest, they were completely out of the picture—except that once a year they would be able to speak for a short time. They were not willing to leave, even if they could.



Simply killing them and making some of all of them into ghosts was a decent alternative (which is why I listed it), but I used the HeroQuesting scenario to introduce the PCs to the rudiments of HeroQuesting themselves. These were little more than a collection of special combat skills, plus a "Hero Lore" metaskill at a very low percentage. The Hero skills gave them a much-needed edge in dealing with their many problems.

● Re the character of Sirene in the Unchill story, once again I was keeping my imagery vague. A mermaid? A manatee? Something else? I didn't visualize while writing. For that story I was working with words only, not images—it was something of an experiment. Conversely, The Old Thing was entirely visual in origin.

● See my comment to **Curtis Taylor** re the Illusionary Dungeon. Regarding the PCs disbelief, I think you underestimate the perversity of the human mind. Wouldn't you find it nearly impossible not to at least wonder about the possibility of all the space around you being nothing more than an illusion? It's like picking at a scab, or scratching a mosquito bite—you know you shouldn't, but you can't help yourself.

**Virgil Greene:** The idea of a campaign in which players create two characters, a "waking self" and a "dream self", is much like several things I've seen done in the past. I have to wonder, however, if it would be a good idea for the players to create both characters. In the Lovecraft story the narrator didn't know of his other nature; likewise, wouldn't the player lose much of the wonder of his "dream self" if he'd designed it himself? I'd rather see the GM design the alternate characters for each PC secretly. Heck,

it would be even more interesting if the players didn't know that they were double-souled.

● Re the movie *Dreamscape*: I always thought that the hero and villain were enormously unimaginative. For one thing, they were always restricted to a flat surface—yet almost everyone has had dreams about flying. Heck, why didn't they dream up uzis, or FGMPS?

I'm sure that a roleplayer or science-fiction reader would have kicked all their butts. 8^>}

Doug Jorenby: The Cybergeneration review was most interesting, though I doubt I'll ever play it (unless you plan to come to the Boston area and run a campaign). It does sound as if it's an improvement over the usual cyberpunk.

● I'll look up that Chapin song.

● Regarding the writer's group, the most appropriate image seems to be somewhat Darwinistic: "Nature, red in tooth and claw". Eliminate any potential competition for your children, your stories. There's something a touch Monty Pythonesque about it: 'Here ve see der ferocious Bull Writer engaged in a life-or-death struggle with his mortal enemy, der younger writer.' 8^>)

● The idea of everyone on ST:NG speaking like Worf had me ROFL. You're right; the refreshing thing about Babylon 5 is that they avoid ST:NG's tendencies toward New Age platitudes. Strange—the original Star Trek was progressive, but fairly hard-headed. I wonder what caused Roddenberry to change so drastically?

Lois Folstein: Wow! Woo! APPLAUSE! Doppelganger is a truly excellent story. I hope we'll see more From the Pen of the Chronicler soon.

● I have to admit that when the the graphic elements of TLTF are apropos, it's usually coincidence. Every time I look at the finished product I'm amazed at the way so many pictures seem to fit the text. I just look for what fits the hole in the page.

● Speaking of graphic elements, I'm very impressed by your zine layout. You have a very good eye for these things—it's hard to believe that this is your first zine (though I know it is). When I recall how crude my first zine was, I blush. Maybe you can give me some suggestions?

● Thanks again for suggesting IR as initials for Interregnum. It seems obvious now, but everyone else I spoke to beforehand was stumped.

Gil Pili: Welcome to Interregnum! I'm glad to have finally dragged you into the clutches of fierce APA addition. ^>)

● Your background was very interesting—funny, I had no clue about most of it though I've known you for years!

● Re *The Crow*: were you aware that a number of shots were digitally created from outtakes after Brandon Lee's death? The slow-motion closing shot you mentioned was one such.

● Having players write down a dark secret of their character is an excellent idea—I've used a similar method myself. Lois actually made up a fascinating pregame exercise which included dark secrets, as I recall; I hope that she'll include it in some forthcoming issue.

● I can't agree that Alice In Wonderland is simply a collection of helter-skelter images. Lewis Carroll was a mathematician, and that sensibility underlies his work; the structure is subtle in many ways, but definitely there.

● Your layout is very handsome and easy to read.

## NEXTISH:

More reviews, more scenario hooks...we'll see what else turns up. Take care!

→Pete



## COLOPHON

The Log That Flies #3 was gestated in a *P. Maranci 30.2 brain*. Much of the text was then generated with *PC-Write 2.5*, an ancient but serviceable word processor.

The text was formatted for desktop publication using *Publish-It 4.0 for Windows*, a cranky but cheap DTP program.

The DTPed document was printed at a ruinous cost at a laser printing service, on a 300 dpi laser printer.

Most of the art in *TLTF* is taken from books of copyright-free clipart published by the *Dover Publishing Co.* of Mineola, NY. Reviews of various Dover books may be printed in future issues.

The art was copied on a *Kodak 2110* high-speed duplicator.

Your message here: 5 silver pieces per word. Join the exciting world of APA writers and write weird little colophons secure in the knowledge that no one will ever read them. ☺

# WHO IS JOHN GALT? #4

Looters beware!

Curtis Taylor, P. O. Box 1144, Ontario, CA 91762-0144/(909) 985-3355/vingkot@aol.com

Glorantha is the creation of Greg Stafford. *RuneQuest* is published by The Avalon Hill Game Company. *RuneQuest* © 1978, 1979, 1980, 1984 by Chaosium Inc. RQ Font © Oliver Jovanovic 1993. *Who is John Galt?* © Curtis Taylor 1994. *Magic: The Gathering* and *Legends* are both © Wizards of the Coast, Inc. 1994. The character John Galt is a creation of Ayn Rand. The use of the name of any product with or without mention of trademark status should not be construed as a challenge to such status.

## LEGENDS

With the recent release of *Legends*, I will make this a special *Magic: The Gathering* edition of *Who is John Galt?*.

*Legends* is the newest expansion of Wizards of the Coast's collectable card game *Magic: The Gathering*. It consists of 310 new cards, a very large expansion, indeed! At the end of my zine is a checklist of the cards.

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## RUNEQUEST NEWS

Michael O'Brien reports that *Soldiers of the Red Moon* is "a go!" Specifically that he will be signing a contract with Avalon Hill to produce *Soldiers of the Red Moon*, a campaign pack for *RuneQuest*. He is thinking about producing it in two books, one featuring player information about the Army, including war gods of the Empire; the other, an epic campaign taking the PCs from enlistment all the way to bloody tribal uprising in Sartar. (Damn those Orlanthi!)

Mike Dawson may edit/develop the book(s).

Joseph Scott, the new *RuneQuest* guy at Avalon Hill, is planning on the end of the year for a release date.

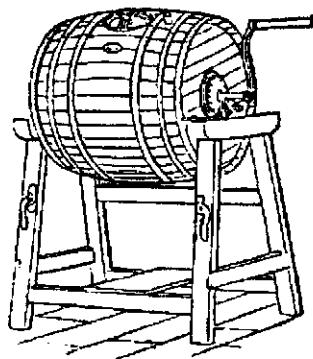
David Cheng is feverishly working on the *RuneQuest-Con Compendium*. David is planning on having the *RQ-Con Compendium* finished in time for distribution at the *Convulsion* convention in England; by July 15th. It will contain, but is not limited to, stories from the storytelling contest and the Interactive Literature game session *Home of the Bold* character write-ups.

Joseph Scott, the new RQ guy at Avalon Hill Game Company, is performing a survey of RQ fans, which is contained below:

- Who are your favorite RQ authors?
- Do you play an exclusively Gloranthan Campaign?
- What sort of supplements would you like to see printed?

Joseph says he is not to much into rules, but will help you however he can. Your answers to his above survey and any questions you have may be e-mailed to him at: <ahrpg@aol.com>.

SHII O.: 父 I O III A M G A + SHII O.: 父 I O III A M G A + SHII O.: 父 I O III A M G A +



## COMMENTS ON INTERREGNUM #3

### Peter Maranci:

- ♪ Cool cover artwork. I like the red background, also.
- ♪ It should be OK to put the account information with the return address without the Post Office messing with it.
- ♪ Your computer crashing sucks. I cannot imagine what I would do if mine went to the big magnetic graveyard in the net.
- ♪ re the net and RQ: There is almost to much RQ material being presented on the net for me to digest. And quality material, at that! I enjoy reading the RQ Digest every night.

### Rich Staats:

- ♪ Interesting...what medication did you say you were taking? Seriously, though, I would like to see more along this line.

SHII O.: 父 I O III A M G A + SHII O.: 父 I O III A M G A + SHII O.: 父 I O III A M G A +



Card Name	Color	Type	Frequency	A	G	A	G	Total
Cyclopean Mummy	Black	Summon	Common	7	7	9	5	28
Darkness	Black	Instant	Common	3	4	3	4	14
Ghosts of the Damned	Black	Summon	Common	7	8	6	6	27
Giant Slug	Black	Summon	Common	6	7	7	7	27
Glyph of Doom	Black	Instant	Common	8	7	6	6	27
Headless Horseman	Black	Summon	Common	4	4	4	3	15
Hell Swarm	Black	Instant	Common	3	4	4	3	14
Lost Soul	Black	Summon	Common	6	5	6	8	25
Pit Scorpion	Black	Summon	Common	7	5	7	6	25
Spirit Shackle	Black	Enchant Creature	Common	3	4	3	3	13
Syphon Soul	Black	Sorcery	Common	6	6	6	6	24
Transmutation	Black	Instant	Common	3	3	2	3	11
Vampire Bats	Black	Summon	Common	6	6	6	9	27
Walking Dead	Black	Summon	Common	4	4	4	3	15
Wall of Shadows	Black	Summon	Common	7	7	7	8	29
Abomination	Black	Summon	Uncommon				2	2
Blight	Black	Enchant Land	Uncommon	2	1	2		5
Demonic Torment	Black	Enchant Creature	Uncommon				2	2
Evil Eye of Orms-by-Gore	Black	Summon	Uncommon				2	2
Fallen Angel	Black	Summon	Uncommon				1	1
Horror of Horrors	Black	Enchantment	Uncommon				2	2
Infernal Medusa	Black	Summon	Uncommon				1	1
Lesser Werewolf	Black	Summon	Uncommon				2	2
Quagmire	Black	Enchantment	Uncommon				1	1
Shimian Night Stalker	Black	Summon	Uncommon	2	3	2		7
Takklemaggot	Black	Enchant Creature	Uncommon	2	3	2		7
Touch of Darkness	Black	Instant	Uncommon				1	1
Underworld Dreams	Black	Enchantment	Uncommon	2	2	1		5
Wall of Putrid Flesh	Black	Summon	Uncommon	2	2	2		6
Wall of Tombstones	Black	Summon	Uncommon	2	2	3		7
All Hallow's Eve	Black	Sorcery	Rare					0
Carrion Ants	Black	Summon	Rare			1		1
Chains of Mephistopheles	Black	Enchantment	Rare			1	1	2
Cosmic Horror	Black	Summon	Rare	1			1	2
Greed	Black	Enchantment	Rare	1			1	2
Hell's Caretaker	Black	Summon	Rare				1	1
Hellfire	Black	Sorcery	Rare	1			1	2
Imprison	Black	Enchant Creature	Rare			1	1	2
Jovial Evil	Black	Sorcery	Rare					0
Mold Demon	Black	Summon	Rare				1	1
Nether Void	Black	Enchant World	Rare			1		1
The Abyss	Black	Enchant World	Rare				1	1
The Wretched	Black	Summon	Rare	1				1

Card Name	Color	Type	Frequency	A	G	A	G	Total
Anti-Magic Aura	Blue	Enchant Creature	Common	4	2	3	3	12
Boomerang	Blue	Instant	Common	8	8	6	6	28
Devouring Deep	Blue	Summon	Common	5	7	7	7	26
Enchantment Alteration	Blue	Instant	Common	3	3	2	3	11
Energy Tap	Blue	Sorcery	Common	6	7	6	6	25
Flash Counter	Blue	Interrupt	Common	7	7	6	8	28
Flash Flood	Blue	Instant	Common	7	6	7	8	28
Force Spike	Blue	Interrupt	Common	7	7	9	6	29
Gaseous Form	Blue	Enchant Creature	Common	3	4	4	3	14
Glyph of Delusion	Blue	Instant	Common	4	4	4	2	14
Psychic Purge	Blue	Sorcery	Common	3	4	3	3	13
Remove Soul	Blue	Interrupt	Common	6	6	5	6	23
Venarian Gold	Blue	Enchant Creature	Common	3	4	3	3	13
Wall of Vapor	Blue	Summon	Common	7	5	7	6	25
Zephyr Falcon	Blue	Summon	Common	6	5	6	9	26
Azure Drake	Blue	Summon	Uncommon				1	1
Backfire	Blue	Enchant Creature	Uncommon				2	2
Brine Hag	Blue	Summon	Uncommon	2	2	2		6
Dream Coat	Blue	Enchant Creature	Uncommon				2	2
Mana Drain	Blue	Interrupt	Uncommon	2	1	2		5
Part Water	Blue	Sorcery	Uncommon				2	2
Puppet Master	Blue	Enchant Creature	Uncommon	2	3	2		7
Relic Bind	Blue	Enchant Artifact	Uncommon	2	2	2		6
Reset	Blue	Interrupt	Uncommon				2	2
Sea King's Blessing	Blue	Instant	Uncommon	2	2	2		6
Segovian Leviathan	Blue	Summon	Uncommon				1	1
Silhouette	Blue	Instant	Uncommon	1	2	1		4
Spectral Cloak	Blue	Enchant Creature	Uncommon	2	2	3		7
Undertow	Blue	Enchantment	Uncommon	2	1	2		5
Wall of Wonder	Blue	Summon	Uncommon				2	2
Acid Rain	Blue	Sorcery	Rare			2		2
Elder Spawn	Blue	Summon	Rare			2		2
Field of Dreams	Blue	Enchahnt World	Rare			1		1
In the Eye of Chaos	Blue	Enchant World	Rare			1		1
Invoke Prejudice	Blue	Enchantment	Rare		1	2		3
Juxtapose	Blue	Sorcery	Rare		1	1		2
Land Equilibrium	Blue	Enchantment	Rare		1			1
Psionic Entity	Blue	Summon	Rare		1			1
Recall	Blue	Sorcery	Rare		1			1
Reverberation	Blue	Instant	Rare		1			1
Telekinesis	Blue	Instant	Rare					0
Teleport	Blue	Instant	Rare		1			1
Time Elemental	Blue		Rare					0

Card Name	Color	Type	Frequency	A	G	A	G	Total
Aisling Leprechaun	Green	Summon	Common	3	4	3	3	13
Avoid Fate	Green	Interrupt	Common	4	2	3	3	12
Barbary Apes	Green	Summon	Common	3	2	3	3	11
Cat Warriors	Green	Summon	Common	6	8	6	7	27
Durkwood Boars	Green	Summon	Common	7	5	6	8	26
Emerald Dragonfly	Green	Summon	Common	6	7	6	5	24
Fire Sprites	Green	Summon	Common	7	6	7	6	26
Giant Turtle	Green	Summon	Common	6	6	5	7	24
Glyph of Reincarnation	Green	Instant	Common	3	4	3	3	13
Hornet Cobra	Green	Summon	Common	7	6	7	7	27
Moss Monster	Green	Summon	Common	6	6	6	8	26
Rust	Green	Interrupt	Common	6	6	9	6	27
Shelkin Brownie	Green	Summon	Common	3	4	4	2	13
Subdue	Green	Instant	Common	4	4	4	2	14
Wolverine Pack	Green	Summon	Common	6	7	6	6	25
Arboria	Green	Enchant World	Uncommon	2	2	2		6
Cocoon	Green	Enchant Creature	Uncommon	2	3	2		7
Craw Giant	Green	Summon	Uncommon				1	1
Deadfall	Green	Enchantment	Uncommon	2	2	3		7
Floral Spuzzem	Green	Summon	Uncommon	2	2	2		6
Ichneumon Druid	Green	Summon	Uncommon				2	2
Pradesh Gypsies	Green	Summon	Uncommon	1	2	2		5
Rabid Wombat	Green	Summon	Uncommon	3	2	2		7
Radjan Spirit	Green	Summon	Uncommon	1	2	2		5
Reincarnation	Green	Instant	Uncommon				1	1
Storm Seeker	Green	Instant	Uncommon				1	1
Sylvan Library	Green	Enchantment	Uncommon	2	2	2		6
Sylvan Paradise	Green	Instant	Uncommon				2	2
Untamed Wilds	Green	Sorcery	Uncommon				2	2
Whirling Dervish	Green	Summon	Uncommon				2	2
Concordant Crossroads	Green	Enchant World	Rare		1			1
Elven Riders	Green	Summon	Rare			2		2
Eureka	Green	Sorcery	Rare		1	1		2
Killer Bees	Green	Summon	Rare		1	1		2
Living Plane	Green	Enchant World	Rare		1	2		3
Master of the Hunt	Green	Summon	Rare		1			1
Pixie Queen	Green	Summon	Rare					0
Rebirth	Green	Sorcery	Rare					0
Revelation	Green	Enchant World	Rare			2		2
Typhoon	Green	Sorcery	Rare					0
Willow Satyr	Green	Summon	Rare		1			1
Winter Blast	Green	Sorcery	Rare					0
Wood Elemental	Green	Summon	Rare			1		1

Card Name	Color	Type	Frequency	A	G	A	G	Total
Active Volcano	Red	Instant	Common	5	7	6	7	25
Blazing Effigy	Red	Summon	Common	5	7	6	6	24
Chain Lightning	Red	Sorcery	Common	7	5	6	7	25
Crimson Kobolds	Red	Summon	Common	6	6	6	8	26
Crookshank Kobolds	Red	Summon	Common	7	6	6	8	27
Feint	Red	Instant	Common	2	4	3	4	13
Giant Strength	Red	Enchant Creature	Common	7	6	7	6	26
Glyph of Destruction	Red	Instant	Common	6	6	5	6	23
Immolation	Red	Enchant Creature	Common	4	4	4	3	15
Kobolds of Kher Keep	Red	Summon	Common	7	6	7	7	27
Pyrotechnics	Red	Sorcery	Common	8	8	9	6	31
Raging Bull	Red	Summon	Common	3	4	3	3	13
The Brute	Red	Enchant Creature	Common	3	2	3	3	11
Wall of Earth	Red	Summon	Common	6	6	6	6	24
Wall of Heat	Red	Summon	Common	3	3	3	4	13
Ærathi Berserker	Red	Summon	Uncommon				1	1
Backdraft	Red	Instant	Uncommon	2	2	1		5
Beasts of Bogardan	Red	Summon	Uncommon				2	2
Blood Lust	Red	Instant	Uncommon				2	2
Crevasse	Red	Enchantment	Uncommon				2	2
Dwarven Song	Red	Instant	Uncommon				1	1
Eternal Warrior	Red	Enchant Creature	Uncommon	2	2	2		6
Frost Giant	Red	Summon	Uncommon	2	2	2		6
Hyperion Blacksmith	Red	Summon	Uncommon				1	1
Kobold Drill Sergeant	Red	Summon	Uncommon				2	2
Kobold Taskmaster	Red	Summon	Uncommon				2	2
Mountain Yeti	Red	Summon	Uncommon	3	2	2		7
Primordial Ooze	Red	Summon	Uncommon				1	1
Wall of Dust	Red	Summon	Uncommon	2	1	2		5
Winds of Change	Red	Sorcery	Uncommon				2	2
Caverns of Despair	Red	Enchant World	Rare		1			1
Crimson Manticore	Red	Summon	Rare		1			1
Disharmony	Red	Instant	Rare	1				1
Falling Star	Red	Sorcery	Rare		1			1
Firestorm Pheonix	Red	Summon	Rare		1			1
Gravity Sphere	Red	Enchant World	Rare	1			1	2
Kobold Overlord	Red	Summon	Rare		1			1
Lands Edge	Red	Enchant World	Rare		1			1
Quarum Trench Gnomes	Red	Summon	Rare	1	1			2
Spinal Villian	Red	Summon	Rare		1			1
Storm World	Red	Enchant World	Rare	1	1			2
Tempest Efreet	Red	Summon	Rare	1			1	2
Wall of Opposition	Red	Summon	Rare	1			1	2

Card Name	Color	Type	Frequency	A	G	A	G	Total
Alabaster Potion	White	Instant	Common	6	6	9	5	26
Amrou Kithkin	White	Summon	Common	7	5	6	6	24
Clergy of the Holy Nimbus	White	Summon	Common	6	6	7	6	25
D'Avenant Archer	White	Summon	Common	6	8	6	7	27
Divine Offering	White	Instant	Common	6	6	6	8	26
Enchanted Being	White	Summon	Common	3	4	5	3	15
Equinox	White	Enchant Land	Common	3	3	2	4	12
Glyph of Life	White	Instant	Common	7	8	6	6	27
Holy Day	White	Instant	Common	4	2	3	3	12
Indestructable Aura	White	Instant	Common	6	6	6	8	26
Keepers of the Faith	White	Summon	Common	7	6	6	8	27
Osai Vultures	White	Summon	Common	4	4	5	3	16
Remove Enchantments	White	Instant	Common	3	4	4	2	13
Tundra Wolves	White	Summon	Common	7	7	6	5	25
Wall of Caltrops	White	Summon	Common	4	4	3	3	14
Fortified Area	White	Enchantment	Uncommon				2	2
Great Defender	White	Instant	Uncommon	2	2	2		6
Great Wall	White	Enchantment	Uncommon				2	2
Greater Realm of Preservation	White	Enchantment	Uncommon				2	2
Heaven's Gate	White	Instant	Uncommon	3	2	2		7
Ivory Guardians	White	Summon	Uncommon	1	2	2		5
Kismet	White	Enchantment	Uncommon				1	1
Land Tax	White	Enchantment	Uncommon	2	2	3		7
Presence of the Master	White	Enchantment	Uncommon	1	2	1		4
Righteous Avengers	White	Summon	Uncommon				2	2
Seeker	White	Enchant Creature	Uncommon	3	2	2		7
Shield Wall	White	Instant	Uncommon				2	2
Spirit Link	White	Enchant Creature	Uncommon	2	3	2		7
Visions	White	Sorcery	Uncommon				2	2
Wall of Light	White	Summon	Uncommon	2	1	2		5
Akron Legionnaire	White	Summon	Rare			1		1
Angelic Voices	White		Rare				0	
Cleanse	White	Sorcery	Rare	1	1			2
Divine Intervention	White		Rare				0	
Divine Transformation	White	Enchant Creature	Rare				0	
Elder Land Wurm	White		Rare				1	1
Infinite Authority	White	Enchant Creature	Rare	1				1
Lifeblood	White	Enchantment	Rare	1				1
Moat	White	Enchantment	Rare		1	1		2
Petra Sphinx	White	Summon	Rare	1			1	2
Rapid Fire	White	Instant	Rare	1			1	2
Spiritual Sanctuary	White	Enchantment	Rare			1	1	2
Thunder Spirit	White		Rare					0

Card Name	Color	Type	Frequency	A	G	A	G	Total
Black Mana Battery	Beige	Artifact	Uncommon				1	1
Blue Mana Battery	Beige	Artifact	Uncommon	1	2	1		4
Green Mana Battery	Beige	Artifact	Uncommon	2	2	2		6
Kry Shield	Beige	Artifact	Uncommon	2	1	2		5
Life Chisel	Beige	Artifact	Uncommon				3	3
Marble Priest	Beige	Artifact Creature	Uncommon				2	2
Red Mana Battery	Beige	Artifact	Uncommon				2	2
Relic Barrier	Beige	Artifact	Uncommon	4	4	5		13
White Mana Battery	Beige	Artifact	Uncommon	2	2	2		6
Al-abar'a's Carpet	Beige	Artifact	Rare					0
Alchor's Tomb	Beige	Artifact	Rare					0
Arena of the Ancients	Beige	Artifact	Rare	1			1	2
Bronze Horse	Beige	Artifact	Rare					0
Forethought Amulet	Beige	Artifact	Rare	1				1
Gauntlets of Chaos	Beige	Artifact	Rare	1				1
Horn of Deafening	Beige	Artifact	Rare	1			1	2
Knowledge Vault	Beige	Artifact	Rare				1	1
Life Matrix	Beige	Artifact	Rare			1	1	2
Mana Matrix	Beige	Artifact	Rare	1			1	2
Mirror Universe	Beige	Artifact	Rare					0
North Star	Beige	Artifact	Rare	1				1
Nova Pentacle	Beige	Artifact	Rare				1	1
Planar Gate	Beige	Artifact	Rare	1				1
Ring of the Immortals	Beige	Artifact	Rare			1		1
Sentinel	Beige	Artifact Creature	Rare			1		1
Serpent Generator	Beige	Artifact	Rare				1	1
Sword of the Ages	Beige	Artifact	Rare	1			1	2
Triassic Egg	Beige	Artifact	Rare			1	1	2
Voodoo Doll	Beige		Rare					0
Adventurer's Guildhouse	Beige	Land	Uncommon	2	2	2		6
Cathedral of Serra	Beige	Land	Uncommon	2	2	2		6
Mountain Stronghold	Beige	Land	Uncommon				2	2
Seafarer's Quay	Beige	Land	Uncommon	3	2	2		7
Unholy Citadel	Beige	Land	Uncommon	1	2	1		4
Hammerheim	Beige	Legendary Land	Uncommon	2	1	2	2	7
Karakas	Beige	Legendary Land	Uncommon				3	3
Pendelhaven	Beige	Legendary Land	Uncommon				3	3
Tolaria	Beige	Legendary Land	Uncommon				2	2
Urborg	Beige	Legendary Land	Uncommon				4	4
The Tabernacle at Pendrell Vale	Beige	Legendary Land	Rare			1	1	2

Card Name	Color	Type	Frequency	A	G	A	G	Total
Barktooth Warbeard	Gold	Summon Legend	Uncommon				2	2
Hunding Gjornersen	Gold	Summon Legend	Uncommon	2	1	2		5
Jasmine Boreal	Gold	Summon Legend	Uncommon				1	1
Jedit Ojanen	Gold	Summon Legend	Uncommon				2	2
Jerrard of the Closed Fist	Gold	Summon Legend	Uncommon				1	1
Kasmir the Lone Wolf	Gold	Summon Legend	Uncommon				1	1
Lady Orca	Gold	Summon Legend	Uncommon				2	2
Lord Magnus	Gold	Summon Legend	Uncommon	2	3	2		7
Marhault Elsdragon	Gold	Summon Legend	Uncommon	3	2	2		7
Pavel Maliki	Gold	Summon Legend	Uncommon				2	2
Princess Lucrezia	Gold	Summon Legend	Uncommon	2	2	2		6
Ramirez DePietro	Gold	Summon Legend	Uncommon	2	2	2		6
Riven Turnbull	Gold	Summon Legend	Uncommon				2	2
Sir Shandlar of Eberyn	Gold	Summon Legend	Uncommon	2	2	1		5
Sivitri Scarzam	Gold	Summon Legend	Uncommon	2	2	1		5
Sunastian Falconer	Gold	Summon Legend	Uncommon	1	2	2		5
The Lady of the Mountain	Gold	Summon Legend	Uncommon				2	2
Tobias Andrion	Gold	Summon Legend	Uncommon				1	1
Tor Wauki	Gold	Summon Legend	Uncommon	2	2	3		7
Torsten Von Ursus	Gold	Summon Legend	Uncommon				2	2
<i>Adur Oakenshield</i>	Gold	Summon Legend	Rare			1		1
Angus Mackenzie	Gold	Summon Legend	Rare	1			1	2
Arcades Sabbath (EDL)	Gold	Summon Legend	Rare		1			1
Axelrod Gunnarson	Gold	Summon Legend	Rare	1				1
Ayesha Tanaka	Gold	Summon Legend	Rare					0
Bartel Runeaxe	Gold	Summon Legend	Rare	1			1	2
Boris Devilboon	Gold	Summon Legend	Rare		1			1
Chromium (EDL)	Gold	Summon Legend	Rare	1			1	2
Dakon Blackblade	Gold	Summon Legend	Rare	1				1
Gabriel Angelfire	Gold	Summon Legend	Rare			1	1	2
Gosta Dirk	Gold	Summon Legend	Rare				1	1
Gwendlyn Di Corci	Gold	Summon Legend	Rare		1			1
Halfdane	Gold	Summon Legend	Rare			1		1
Hazezon Tamar	Gold	Summon Legend	Rare	1			1	2
Jacques le Vert	Gold	Summon Legend	Rare	1				1
Johan	Gold	Summon Legend	Rare		1			1
Kei Takahashi	Gold	Summon Legend	Rare		1			1
Lady Caleria	Gold	Summon Legend	Rare		1			1
Lady Evangelia	Gold	Summon Legend	Rare				1	1
Livonya Silone	Gold	Summon Legend	Rare	1			1	2
Nebuchadnezzar	Gold	Summon Legend	Rare	1	1			2
Nicol Bolas (EDL)	Gold	Summon Legend	Rare	1			1	2
Palladia-Mors (EDL)	Gold	Summon Legend	Rare					0

Card Name	Color	Type	Frequency	A	G	A	G	Total
Ragnar	Gold	Summon Legend	Rare					0
Ramses Overdark	Gold	Summon Legend	Rare	1				1
Rasputin Dreamweaver	Gold	Summon Legend	Rare	1				1
Rohgahh of Kher Keep	Gold	Summon Legend	Rare	1	1		1	3
Rubinia Soulsinger	Gold	Summon Legend	Rare			1	1	2
Sol'kanar the Swamp King	Gold	Summon Legend	Rare	1			1	2
Stangg	Gold	Summon Legend	Rare		1			1
Tetsuo Umezawa	Gold	Summon Legend	Rare		1			1
Tuknir Deathlock	Gold	Summon Legend	Rare		1			1
Ur-Drago	Gold	Summon Legend	Rare		1			1
Vaevictus Asmadi (EDL)	Gold	Summon Legend	Rare					0
Xira Arien	Gold	Summon Legend	Rare			1		1
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>538</b>	<b>540</b>	<b>540</b>	<b>541</b>	<b>2159</b>

This is a survey of all of the display boxes of *Legends* that I have opened up. The letters 'A' and 'G' indicate the store where I purchased the display box; the numbers in the columns below these letters indicates the quantity of cards for that row.

The Legends with (EDL) following their names are Elder Dragon Legends. There are five Elder Dragon Legends.

Looking at the totals reveals that I did not get exactly the correct amount of cards in each display box. The discrepancies are probably with the common cards.

The blank spots in the 'type' column means that I did not know the type when I printed this up.

Card Typos:

Ærathi Berserker (red uncommon card): is missing the "Æ" in the upper-left corner.

Blood Lust (red uncommon card): The card text should read "Target creature," not "Target creatures."

## LEGENDS

### BLACK

Cyclopean Mummy	Common
Darkness	Uncommon
Ghosts of the Damned	Common
Giant Slug	Common
Glyph of Doom	Common
Headless Horseman	Common
Hell Swarm	Common
Lost Soul	Common
Pit Scorpion	Common
Siphon Soul	Common
Transmutation	Common
Vampire Bats	Common
Spirit Shackles	Common
Walking Dead	Common
Wall of Shadows	Common
Abomination	Uncommon
Blight	Uncommon
Demonic Torment	Uncommon
Evil Eye of Orms-by-Gore	Uncommon
Fallen Angel	Uncommon
Horror of Horrors	Uncommon
Internal Medusa	Uncommon
Lesser Werewolf	Uncommon
Quagmire	Uncommon
Shimian Night Stalker	Uncommon
Takklemaggot	Uncommon
Touch of Darkness	Uncommon
Underworld Dreams	Uncommon
Wall of Putrid Flesh	Uncommon
Wall of Tombstones	Uncommon
All Hallow's Eve	Rare
Carriion Ants	Rare
Chains of Mephistophelies	Rare
Cosmic Horror	Rare
Greed	Rare
Hell's Caretaker	Rare
Hellfire	Rare
Imprison	Rare
Jovial Evil	Rare
Mold Demon	Rare
Nether Void	Rare
The Abyss	Rare
The Wretched	Rare

Anti-Magic Aura	Common
Boomerang	Common
Devouring Deep	Common
Enchantment Alteration	Common
Energy Tap	Common
Flash Flood	Common
Force Spike	Common
Gaseous Form	Common

### FLORAL

Floral Spuzzem	Common
Ichneumon Druid	Uncommon
Pradesh Gypsies	Uncommon
Rabid Wombat	Uncommon
Radijan Spirit	Uncommon
Reincarnation	Uncommon
Storm Seeker	Uncommon
Sylvan Library	Uncommon
Sylvan Paradise	Uncommon
Untamed Wilds	Uncommon
Whirling Dervish	Uncommon
Concordant Crossroads	Rare
Elven Riders	Rare
Eureka	Rare
Killer Bees	Rare
Living Plane	Rare
Master of the Hunt	Rare
Pixie Queen	Rare
Rebirth	Rare
Revelation	Rare
Typhoon	Rare
Willow Satyr	Rare
Winter Blast	Rare
Wood Elemental	Rare

### GREEN

Glyph of Delusion	Common
Psychic Purge	Common
Remove Soul	Common
Venarian Gold	Common
Wall of Vapor	Common
Zephyr Falcon	Common
Azure Drake	Common
Backfire	Common
Brine Hag	Common
Dream Coat	Common
Mana Drain	Common
Part Water	Common
Puppet Master	Common
Relic Bind	Common
Reset	Common
Sea King's Blessing	Uncommon
Segovian Leviathan	Uncommon
Silhouette	Uncommon
Spectral Cloak	Uncommon
Undertow	Uncommon
Wall of Wonder	Uncommon
Acid Rain	Rare
Elder Spawn	Rare
Field of Dreams	Rare
In the Eye of Chaos	Rare
Invoke Prejudice	Rare
Juxtapose	Rare
Land Equilibrium	Rare
Psionic Entity	Rare
Recall	Rare
Reverberation	Rare
Telekinesis	Rare
Teleport	Rare
Time Elemental	Rare

### GREEN

Aisling Leprechaun	Common
Avoid Fate	Common
Barbary Apes	Common
Cat Warriors	Common
Durkwood Boars	Common
Emerald Dragonfly	Common
Fire Sprites	Common
Giant Turtle	Common
Glyph of Reincarnation	Common
Hornet Cobra	Common
Moss Monster	Common

### RED

Active Volcano	Common
Blazing Effigy	Common
Chain Lightning	Common
Crimson Kobolds	Common
Crookshank Kobolds	Common
Feint	Common
Giant Strength	Common
Glyph of Destruction	Common
Immolation	Common
Kobolds of Kher Keep	Common
Pyrotechnics	Common
Raging Bull	Common
The Brute	Common
Wall of Earth	Common
Wall of Heat	Common
Ærathi Berserker	Uncommon
Backdraft	Uncommon
Beasts of Bogardan	Uncommon
Blood Lust	Uncommon
Crevasse	Uncommon
Dwarven Song	Uncommon
Eternal Warrior	Uncommon

### BLUE

Frost Giant	Common
Hyperion Blacksmith	Common
Kobold Drill Sergeant	Common
Kobold Taskmaster	Common
Mountain Yeti	Common
Primordial Ooze	Common
Wall of Dust	Common

## LEGENDS

<b>WINDS OF CHANGE</b>	Uncommon	Petra Sphinx	Rare
Caverns of Despair	Rare	Rapid Fire	Rare
Crimson Marticore	Rare	Spiritual Sanctuary	Rare
Disharmony	Rare	Thunder Spirit	Rare
Falling Star	Rare		
Firestorm Phoenix	Rare		
Gravity Sphere	Rare		
Kobold Overlord	Rare		
Lands Edge	Rare		
Quarum French Gnomes	Rare		
Spinal Villian	Rare		
Storm World	Rare		
Tempest Effect	Rare		
Wall of Opposition	Rare		
<b>WHITE</b>	Potion		
Alabaster	Common		
Antrou Kithkin	Common		
Clergy of the Holy Nimbus	Common		
D'Avendant Archer	Common		
Divine Offering	Common		
Enchanted Being	Common		
Equinox	Common		
Glyph of Life	Common		
Holy Day	Common		
Indestructable Aura	Common		
Keepers of the Faith	Common		
Osa! Vultures	Common		
Remove Enchantments	Common		
Tundra Wolves	Common		
Wall of Caltrops	Common		
Fortified Area	Common		
Great Defender	Common		
Great Wall	Common		
Greater Realm of Preservation	Common		
Heaven's Gate	Common		
Ivory Guardians	Common		
Kismet	Common		
Land Tax	Common		
Presence of the Master	Common		
Righteous Avengers	Common		
Seeker	Common		
Shield Wall	Common		
Spirit Link	Common		
Visions	Common		
Wall of Light	Common		
Aktron Legionnaire	Rare		
Angelic Voices	Rare		
Cleanse	Rare		
Divine Intervention	Rare		
Elder Land Wurm	Rare		
Infinite Authority	Rare		
Lifeblood	Rare		
Moat	Rare		
<b>ARTIFACT</b>			
Alabaster	Uncommon	Black Mana Battery	Rare
Amber	Uncommon	Blue Mana Battery	Rare
Antique	Uncommon	Green Mana Battery	Rare
Archaeological	Uncommon	Kry Shield	Rare
Archaeological	Uncommon	Life Chisel	Rare
Archaeological	Uncommon	Marble Priest	Rare
Archaeological	Uncommon	Red Mana Battery	Rare
Archaeological	Uncommon	Relic Barrier	Rare
Archaeological	Uncommon	White Mana Battery	Rare
Archaeological	Uncommon	Al'abar'a's Carpet	Rare
Archaeological	Uncommon	Ancient Tomb	Rare
Archaeological	Uncommon	Arena of the Ancients	Rare
Archaeological	Uncommon	Bronze Horse	Rare
Archaeological	Uncommon	Forethought Amulet	Rare
Archaeological	Uncommon	Gauntlets of Chaos	Rare
Archaeological	Uncommon	Horn of Deafening	Rare
Archaeological	Uncommon	Knowledge Vault	Rare
Archaeological	Uncommon	Life Matrix	Rare
Archaeological	Uncommon	Mana Matrix	Rare
Archaeological	Uncommon	Mirror Universe	Rare
Archaeological	Uncommon	North Star	Rare
Archaeological	Uncommon	Nova Pentacle	Rare
Archaeological	Uncommon	Planar Gate	Rare
Archaeological	Uncommon	Ring of the Immortals	Rare
Archaeological	Uncommon	Sentinel	Rare
Archaeological	Uncommon	Serpent Generator	Rare
Archaeological	Uncommon	Sword of the Ages	Rare
Archaeological	Uncommon	Triassic Egg	Rare
Archaeological	Uncommon	Voodoo Doll	Rare
<b>LAND</b>			
Adventurer's Guildhouse	Uncommon		
Cathedral of Serra	Uncommon		
Mountain Stronghold	Uncommon		
Seafarer's Quay	Uncommon		
Unholy Citadel	Uncommon		
<b>LEGENDARY LAND</b>			
Hammerehm	Uncommon		
Karakas	Uncommon		
Pendelhaven	Uncommon		
Tolaria	Uncommon		
Urborg	Uncommon		
The Tabernacle at Pendrell Vale	Rare		
<b>LEGENDS</b>			
Barktooth Warbeard	Uncommon	Jedit Ojanen	Uncommon
Hundung Gjornersen	Uncommon	Jerrard of the Closed Fist	Uncommon
Jasmine Boreal	Uncommon	Kasmir the Lone Wolf	Uncommon

# The Skeleton Key

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#10

## BEHIND THE MASK: Playing and Creating Other Cultures

All too often in games, other cultures are represented in one of two ways. Either they are portrayed as totally incomprehensible to the sensible person, or made comparable to (and sometimes plagiarized unashamedly from) present day cultures. Both are easy ways out of creating a culture that would enrich the entire campaign world and add variety to the "sameness" of many encounters.

Portraying another culture as totally incomprehensible not only de-emphasizes the dynamic nature of culture, but gives the players the impression that there isn't much point in trying to reach for a deeper understanding, because their minds "work differently." If the characters have no reason to try to understand the other culture, as friends, enemies or whatever, a valuable roleplaying opportunity has been lost.

GMs also often fashion cultures by using other cultures as templates. Problems arise when the author makes no effort to hide or alter the original culture in question, presenting a barely clothed culture sketch that even with the "alien" names often taken from the original culture resembles stereotyped ideas of common cultures; the quasi-arabic culture is a popular one, as is the "inscrutable oriental type" culture. If the "alien" culture really isn't all that alien at all, one loses the



sense of wonder and uncertainty that should be present in any exploration of something truly new.

While it is extremely difficult for a GM to create an alien culture out of whole cloth, it is worth making the attempt. Nothing makes the variety and vividness of a game stand out than a panoply of cultures rubbing shoulders or warring or isolating themselves from one another. The fact that not everyone is "like us" makes the game world stranger, richer and far more complex.

Every culture makes sense to a native because their world view is elaborated on premises that may differ from the outsiders. They may seem crazy or illogical to outsiders, but that is because the observers aren't working from the same set of givens as the natives. One illustration of this is from a session of my science fiction PBEM where Thora wants to take some friends beast-back riding.

Mara, a woman from a former mining colony on a desolate world is in for a surprise.

Mara turns around and sticks her head out of the command module. "Nem! Thora wants us to go riding!" She pulls back in, and then pauses. "Um, Thora, what's a kysshe and how hard are they to drive?"

Thora giggles, "Drive? Umm... I take it you've never ridden... anything?" "Kysshe... uh, sort of horse-like in temperament... here, we should be able to call up a holo."

"Umm... do you know what a horse is?"

Mara looks wary. "Cycles, hummers, ore scoo...you mean they're \*alive\*?"

Thora looks astonished, then bursts into laughter. She rapidly gets a guilty look through her laughter, and tries to stifle it, with muttered, "Sorry!"s.

Mara puts a hand on her hip. "What's so funny?...and what's a horse?"

Thora chokes, and finally forces back the laughter, even though her eyes are almost tearing from the effort!

Mara glowers at her, though she doesn't seem to be seriously upset, just puzzled and a bit miffed.

"uh... ooh, Maara, your face! Oh, I'm sorry, I'm not trying to laugh at \*you\*, it's just I didn't realize you didn't \*know\*!"

A minor but amusing

confusion that added a bit of flavor to the game. It is this interplay between cultures, and the potential for some roleplaying cultural confusion that provides the impetus for an attempt at creating a realistic or at least believable culture. Such an effort requires at least an appreciation of some of the elements that shape culture. Anthropologists and sociologists have been arguing about the elemental forces that shape culture for decades, and the debates show no sign of ending. There are no definite rules, rather there are a few extant paradigms which have garnered support. Here are just a few points that a GM might keep in mind while creating an alien culture.

**There is no evolution.**  
Rather, there is no strict

scale of cultural evolution on which one can place the vast arrays of cultures, ranking them from "primitive" to "advanced." Such measures can apply to technology, and often these are the criteria by which cultures are ascribed status - mistakenly linking their cultural complexity with their technological. Technologically primitive cultures are no less complex than advanced technological ones.

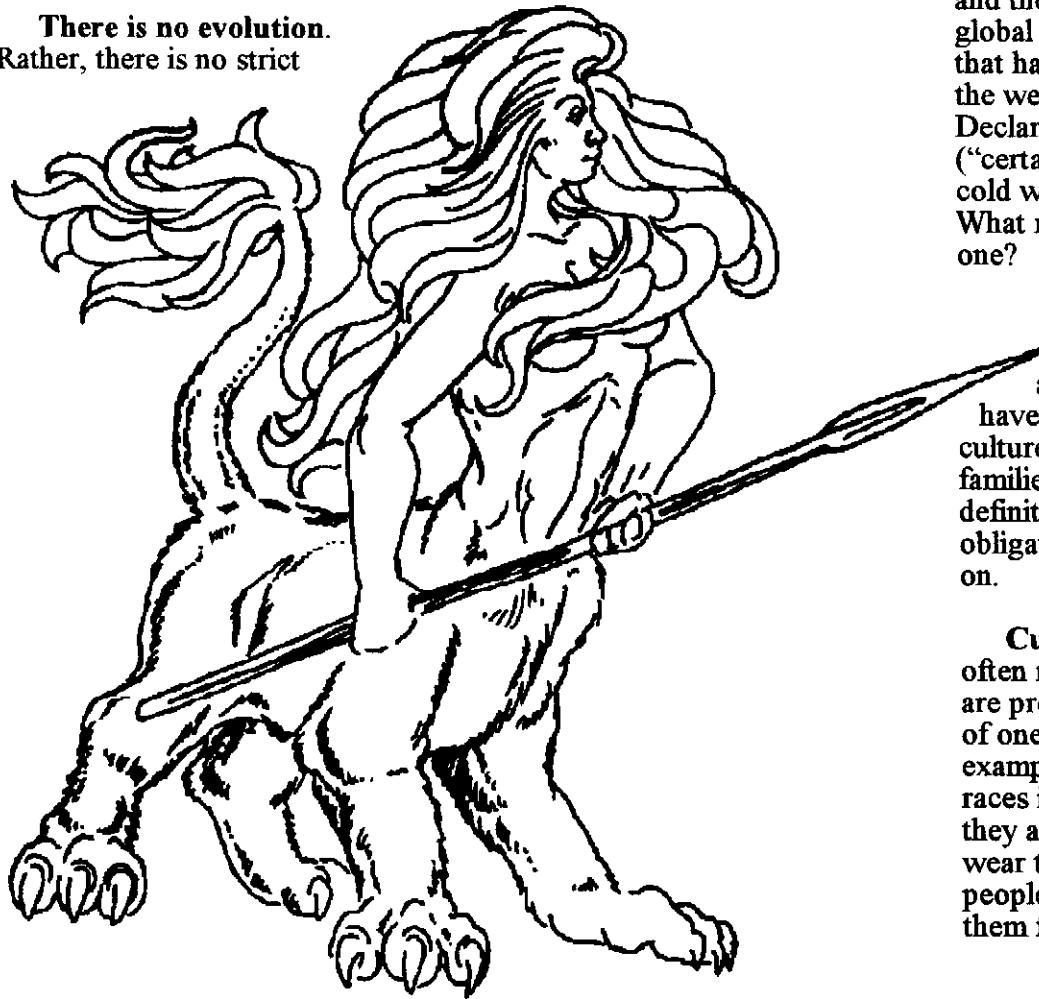
**Environment shapes culture.**  
The environment in which a people live will necessarily affect the development of their culture, though the extent to which this is true is debated. One example is the bedouin custom of hospitality.

It is possible that this custom was in response to the harshness of their desert environment. By housing and feeding guests whomever they might be, they assured that they would receive similar treatment, creating a social custom mitigating the severity of their environment. Questions that might come to mind in this area: What is the climate? What do people wear? Why?

**Myth and Histories are powerful.** What are the history of a given people? What perceived injustices or triumphs are written into their pasts? What religions, if any, shape their culture, and attendant beliefs? The ideas of Manifest Destiny, natural rights and the idea of superpowers as global policemen are all elements that have driven the expansion of the west, the ideas behind the Declaration of Independence - ("certain unalienable rights"), and cold war politics in the real world. What might they do in a fictional one?

**Family is important.**  
The social structures and kinship of a people can have widespread effects on the culture. Do they have large families? Small ones? What is the definition of a family? Are there obligations? The list goes on and on.

**Cultures are complex.** Too often members of other cultures are presented as uniformed clones of one another. My favorite examples are many of the alien races in Star Trek. Notice how they all almost look identical, and wear the same outfits? This is the people-in-funny-hats effect. Give them funny noses, identical



costumes, and wallah! Alien culture. This monocultural approach is just another noxious form of broad generalization. The simplification of alien cultures is made necessary by their presentation in the show - either as enemies or friendly backdrops to the Enterprise crew's adventures. Only rarely as with the Bajorans in the series Deep Space Nine, are we given a sense that an alien culture might be as complex and complicated as our own. Take any culture in the world and you will find subcultures within - fictional cultures should be no exception.

Start with the world they have been created on, and imagine the parts of their culture that come to mind first, always asking, how might one think if they lived that way? What beliefs might form the core of their world view. How might that cause them to act? Since these other cultures are likely to appear personified as individual characters, know how

they think - but always remember that there are surely those who hold other views.

Even an attempt to simulate the complexities of culture can produce a more realistic portrait of a fictional portrait - since culture is not from a single viewpoint, but from many.

Of course no author has the ability or time to cover all the bases, to patch all the holes in the new alien culture that has brought to life. But even a cursory effort at creating a complex culture that has internal consistency and depth can produce a fascinating new world for the player characters, with strange friends, enigmatic enemies and the backdrop to a grand new adventure in another land.



## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- Where do they live? How is the climate? What sort of houses do they build, clothes do they wear and how do they make their living?
- What do they look like, what are their styles and fetishes? Are there common skin or eye colors? Rare ones? Ones about whom legends are told?
- What is their history? What perceived injustices or triumphs are written into their pasts? Who are their heroes and villains?
- What religions, if any, shape their culture, and attendant beliefs? Are there certain things that almost everyone believes? Are certain symbols prominent in their culture? Do they tell stories? Dance?
- Do they have large families? Small ones? What is the definition of a family? Are there obligations?
- Who are the movers and shakers in their society? What sort of government do they have, and how does it work? How is the military seen? Who controls resources and what tensions are there?

# COMMENTS ON INTERREGNUM #2

## the Log #3

*Can a game system exist solely on the InterNet and actually flourish as a result?*

I suppose it depends on what you mean by a game system. If you mean the creation and articulation of game mechanics, that is an ongoing process in almost every gaming newsgroup on the net. Or if you mean a campaign, the surprising fact that my PBEM is still roaring along should be proof enough.

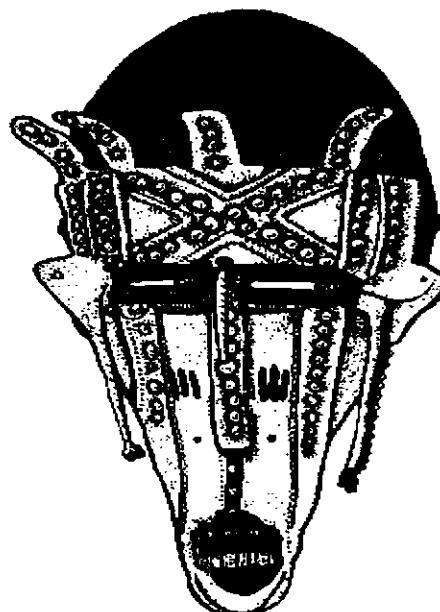
*From a strictly mathematical viewpoint the Net offers access to more people - and from a roleplaying viewpoint a better quality of people.*

You associate high-intelligence with high quality - a fit which isn't quite valid. It is a conceit of the educated to believe that they are above and better than the unwashed masses, but it is clear from a few moments careful consideration that this is not true. I've been fairly lucky to have been surrounded with a number of intelligent and interesting people, both in real life, and on the Net, but I've seen that intelligence is no proof of maturity or sensibility. I don't bother to read the dross that floats through many of the gaming newsgroups on the Net, because I tire rapidly of technical discussions, big egos and flamewars. So I'd hesitate in asserting anything as to the quality of the average net user.

Dreams have been a large part of almost all my role-playing games

I enjoyed your story, and it made me reflect on how much I enjoy

dreaming. Sad dreams, happy dreams, fantastic ones, they've given me ideas and made me think. In games I've used dreams as mediums to reflect inner conflict, messages from the subconscious, and sometimes as major plot elements.



## REFUGEE #??

*It would be interesting to see a world like ours but brighter for a change.* I couldn't agree more in real life, though I think that as far as gaming goes, part of the appeal is that something is wrong, something that the PCs can fix. Adventurers always live on the edge of settled society and are always at a loss in peaceful lands.

## DISTANT #1

Welcome to APAland Lois! Enjoyed the story, though why summarize instead of letting us read to the end?

## SANDS #1

Welcome at last, Gil! *It's as if people when they get older, turn their backs on that feeling of strangeness, somehow thinking that paying attention to the unusual will estrange them from normality.* I hear you. It is the unusual, the new and the powerful that I seek out in my role-playing, and in life, when I can steal a moment from my academic track. It is amazing how much one can draw out of the simple things, a ride on a swan boat, Scooperbowl as-much-ice-cream-as-you-can-eat, or a conversation with friends sitting on a rock in the middle of a river. It is this sense of wonder that I'm always trying to work into my games.

## SESSION NOTES #17

Enjoyed your review of Cybergeneration. Once the academic term begins, I may well end up running such a game. Your hypertext style layout is engaging and readable.

## 8-TRACK #3

Dreams are a fascinating medium for roleplaying, because all the normal rules of reality are off. In my PBEM "Dauphin's Prize", one of the characters has a small creature which seems to interweave the dreams of nearby sleepers. Characters have had premonitions, hints from their subconscious, and nightmares that have affected their waking actions. Another character, an amnesiac, constantly recalls bits and pieces of her life in her dreams, never knowing what is true and what is not.

**CONTINUING JOURNEY OF THE DAUPHIN...**

## **QUOTES FROM THE EDGE**

If there's anything we don't like, it's people stowing away on the same ship we're stowing away on, taking what might be useful to us, and toting a gun! *a thought of stowaway Kendra Murphy.*

"I wonder who I go to if I'm feeling in danger from the security chief?"  
*Cassandra Ree, passenger, commenting after the security officer flashed a knife at the pilot.*

"Is there anything else you want me to check, or do I get to come back and help menace the prisoner?" *Cassandra, checking out the ship once they've discovered the stowaway.*

"You know, we have to stop meeting like this... I think Mara is getting suspicious. So do you have a name? I'd like to warn you that if you don't tell me what to call you, I'll come up with something on my own and you probably won't like it." *Cassandra to Kendra, before she's chosen a name.*

"We better be careful, Ms. Murphy has shown an attentive streak I rarely find in my students. Perhaps I should carry the rifle more often as a teacher's aid. [...]" *Professor JP Watts guarding the stowaway with a rifle.*

"Kendra? Is something wrong?" She grimaces slightly, and continues, "More wrong than usual?" *Thora the pilot to Kendra, who is discovering that she was some agency's lab project.*

# Session Notes #18

## Douglas E. Forenby



### The Decline Of The West

Well.....maybe that overstates it a *bit*. ☺ Old Oswald Spengler had such a great title, though, it seems a shame not to use it to describe three marginally related things coming together for me in the span of two weeks. A true synergism, of sorts.

First, when I was spell-checking my zine for **Interregnum #3**, an interesting thing happened. The phenomenally successful card game, **Magic: The Gathering**, is usually abbreviated as **M:tG**. When my spell-checker came across this, it suggested that I had misspelled the word "marketing." Curiouser and curioser....

Second, T\$R, Inc.™ mailed me a packet of information for GenCon 1994. Among other interesting features, I noticed they had devoted the entire inside back cover to plugging their **M:tG** clone. I believe it is going to be called **Money: The Gathering Thereof**. ☺ Seriously, it will be called **Spellfire: Master The Magic**. Given the frequency with which T\$R, Inc.'s™ corporate lawyers™ have sued other companies over real or imagined infringements of copyright, this seems *awfully* similar to the Wizards Of The Coast title and concept. Let's not forget that this is the wild and crazy bunch who tried to copyright "Nazi". Perhaps their legal division is even now moving to copyright colons and subtitles. The question that arises for me (to paraphrase Lou Reed) is "Does anybody need a second magic combat card game?" For that matter, does anybody need a *first* magic card game?

The third event happened last night, when I stopped by Pegasus Games on my way home from the hospital. During the brief time I was chatting with the two Pegazoids at the counter, one customer bought two Starter Decks and another bought four Booster packs. Both elicited groans and furrowed brows from the staff. After the customers left, I asked what was the matter. These were the same guys who were telling me last autumn that **M:tG** was the next great thing in gaming -- a phenomenon to rival the original **D&D**.

The cause of their disenchantment (so to speak ☺) was sobering. **M:tG** has clearly attracted an audience beyond the core community of gamers. It sells well not only in game stores, but also in trading card stores and even a local comic shop that doesn't stock any other game material. In this way, it appears similar to White Wolf's **Vampire: The Masquerade**, which has attracted many new players to RPG (particularly fans of the Anne Rice vampire novels). What the folks at Pegasus have noted, though, is that unlike **V:tM**, **M:tG** is having a

**Potential Lawsuit?**

I wonder if T\$R, Inc.<sup>TM</sup> and White Wolf will battle it out over whether games with colons in the title are their exclusive intellectual property? ☺

**Marginal Cost Savings:**  
I suppose it's not even necessary for players to invest in dice. However, many RPGers are so superstitious that they won't let anyone else touch their dice. In certain crowds, the number of dice owned seems to have a direct correlation with the owner's coolness.



displacement effect. That is, traditional gamers are spending money on more and more cards instead of making purchases of RPG materials or board games. Nor does this seem to be a phenomenon unique to Madison (that island in the midst of Reality ☺). In the most recent copy of Avalon Hill's *The General*, M:tG was the third-rated game! Non-Avalon Hill games barely register in *The General's* rankings, and here we have the ultimate bastion of *groggnards* seriously subverted by a magic combat card game. Ask not for whom the bell tolls, **Advanced Squad Leader**, it tolls for thee.

As **F. Bob Mosdal** is fond of saying, "Yeah? So what's your point?" The points are several. Games have traditionally been good deals in the sense of entertainment for the dollar. In addition, role playing games have been quite cost-effective. In the most basic form, one person (the ref) bought a rules set, perhaps photocopied some character sheets, and all the players needed to provide was time and a few dice. If you factor in the cost of one set of rules against the hundreds of hours of play time a campaign can generate, it turns out to be a ridiculously low cost per hour per person. It's certainly possible to spend more money, perhaps buying miniatures or various game aids, but they just make things easier (saving time or making things easier to visualize), they don't give you an advantage over the other players. The opposite is true in M:tG. The more you spend, the bigger your deck gets, and if the other person runs out of cards before you do, you win. Perhaps the correlation between funds spent and success isn't perfect, but it's certainly more positive than with role playing games. I realize this is something of an ideological stance, but I find a game that rewards your ability to shell out money to be objectionable.

Consider next the point of all this expenditure. With a board game or RPG, you pay to get the essentials of the game, then use that investment to share a social experience with others. In a board game, the goal is probably to win (a zero-sum game) by defeating the other player or players. RPGs are likely more cooperative, in that the players often work together to overcome whatever obstacles the ref presents them with (non zero-sum). M:tG is thus closer to board games in the sense of zero-sum competition. It adds an additional element, though. Although I suppose it is theoretically possible, I've never heard of players playing a board game to decide who will own it. When playing M:tG for ante (which appears to be the most popular way to play the game), this is *exactly* the point of the game. **J.M. Caparula** put it well when he said, "The whole point is to buy lots of cards so you can get more rare ones and use them to win more rare cards from other people." Gosh. What



It may not be ancient, but parts of it are still Celtic.

**Historical Settings:**  
 There was a potentially interesting thread about this raised recently on *rec.games.frp.misc*. Sadly, it didn't inspire much intelligent discussion. ☺ APA writing appears to be more thoughtful on the whole than Usenet postings.

more could we ask for by way of pro-social behavior? Perhaps **M:tG** should have been the game of the 1980's: "I've got mine, and I'm going to use it to get yours, too." It seems to fit the 1980s mindset quite well. I wonder if Donald Trump plays it in his spare time? ☺

Certainly this latter criticism can be defused simply by avoiding playing for ante. I imagine there are groups out there who do exactly that, using the game as a contest of skill between friends, with nary a card changing hands. That seems rare in the *Real World*™, but I don't want to rule it out.

Not playing for ante doesn't resolve what I think is the most serious criticism of **M:tG**, and that is the dead-end nature of the game. What do I mean by that? Both historical board games and role playing games tend to reach beyond the games themselves. For example, virtually all the board gamers I know also read history. In many cases, playing a particular game inspires them to "read more about it." The same can be said for RPGs, esp. ones based in particular historical settings. Over the years, I've done a great deal of research into the 1930s and the Celtic cultures of ancient Britain (to take two examples) because I wanted to make games in those settings come alive. While not everyone is inspired to research (an affliction unique among academics? ☺), many people are inspired to read more fiction, or seek out movies related to the genre, or develop an interest in a relevant style of music. The list is only fettered by the bounds of imagination.

Where does **M:tG** point beyond itself? There is no historical epoch to plumb for information, there are no cultures to survey, nothing that goes beyond the content of the game itself. This is not damning in and of itself -- how many people make a point of studying the work of Milton Friedman after playing a game of **Monopoly**? -- but since money and interest are being funneled away from games that do provide some external benefit, it is a net loss.

Having written all of this, do I think it will have the least impact on the ravenous hordes of 12 year olds who are queuing up to buy Booster Pack after Booster Pack? Of course not. But it did give me something to mutter about this month in the august pages of **Interregnum**.



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**Compensation:** I found myself thinking of a line from Talking Heads: "Always for love/ Never for money..." Why do you put so much work in to *Interregnum*, Pete? It's not making you wealthy. Why do I run games, when I could be out doing CME lectures f o r m o n e y? Compensation comes in many colors other than green, I suspect.



### Comments on *Interregnum* # 3

**Maranci:** I'm intrigued by your idea of **RQ** breaking out of corporate gridlock and becoming an exclusive Net entity. Such an event would certainly set the game companies scrambling. I'm not sure how Avalon Hill would handle it, although I can hardly imagine T\$R, Inc.™ allowing the Net to take over a property of theirs -- even one they no longer chose to support.

As to the issue of compensation that **David Dunham** raised, I think the very existence of the Net argues against it. Look how many people devote hours and hours to posting to Usenet newsgroups, or develop Mosaic homepages, or moderate discussions, without a dime changing hands. The payoff is in something different than cold, hard cash (although that's rare enough in traditional game publishing). Could you make a career of publishing Net **RQ** material? Probably not, but most people can't make a living that way now. The payoff is in other people using your material, in being perceived as a Net.**RQ**.Deity, or in the sheer joy of creation.

**Staats:** Congratulations on your recent elevation to the ranks of Phud-dom. I've never played *It Came From The Late Late Show*, but your character descriptions make it sound like a lot of fun. Good luck in D.C.

**Taylor:** Read, but no real comment on the errata. Sorry.

**Ferrier:** Bwahahahahaha! Loved the jackalope graphic! A little-known use of Microsoft's Encarta is to use your multimedia system to make scary cat noises. ☺ The sound file for the Maine Coon Cat is a particular favorite around my house, although some of the birdsongs may also be used to good effect.

**Phillies:** Thanks for reprinting Jennifer Clarke Wilkes' thoughtful article on Minister Rock's draft amendments. I've been impressed by the quality of her posts; she also seems much more active than the American branch of CAR-PG<sub>a</sub>.

I've been thinking of archiving my exceedingly rare copy of the April, 1994 issue of *Wired*. Because of a very minor reference to Internet users circumventing the Ontario press ban on coverage of the Teale/Homolka trial, *Wired*'s distributors removed the issue from most sales venues. (It was not, as originally reported, banned by the Canadian government.)



Think Globally,  
Shop Locally? ☺

**Dreams:** One time it did work to use dreams as foreshadowing was when the PCs had bizarre "prophetic" dreams. These were too surreal to have any direct connection to the real world, but aspects of them came to bear at a later point in the campaign when the PCs found themselves in a virtual world that was based on someone else's dream.

Personally, I hope that Parliament will reject the draft amendments. However, Canada's social and legal traditions are much closer to England's than the U.S.'s. When I was in Vancouver over Victoria Day, virtually all the Toronto ex-pats "knew" the details of the Teale/Homolka case, primarily via word of mouth. None of them, however, were particularly disturbed by the press ban. There was some sympathy for the Netters who were thumbing their virtual noses at the Mounties, but none of the censorship outcries you might expect in the States.

**Hoberman:** OUTSTANDING layout and graphics, David! I'm really impressed, esp. with the title page and the Lightspeed sidebar on page 3. What are you using for DTPing these days?

As much as I'd like to volunteer to review *Castle Falkenstein* and/or *Mekton Zeta*, I'm afraid there will be a few barriers. First, I doubt I'll be going to GenCon this year. There are no seminars of interest on Saturday, and I don't see much point to paying \$5 for the privilege of shopping the Dealers' Room. I think I'll wait a day or two and be a loyal Pegasus Games customer.

As far as the games go, I really have little interest at this point. If *Castle Falkenstein* had come out anywhere close to when it was supposed to, I might have given it a go. Now I'm committed to a different campaign, and I'm not interested in throwing it over. *Mekton Zeta* has some intellectual appeal, but I don't see any potential to use it in the foreseeable future, so I probably won't spring for it. And so it goes...

**Greene:** I enjoyed reading your diverse thoughts on dreams. I must confess that, I, too, have used dreams from time to time in games. The biggest problem I have with using them is trying to be faithful to the source material. The temptation (and it seems to crop up in a lot of modules that use dreams) is to make dreams very linear and "sensible." Especially if you're using dreams as a way of giving PCs clues, this is attractive. However, dreams are seldom linear or sensible. Even when we retell them (what Freud called "secondary elaboration"), they seldom have the coherence of RPG "dreams."

**Folstein:** Welcome to *Interregnum*, Lois! And thank you for making *IR* the official abbreviation for the APA. My fingers thank you. My wrists thank you. The infinite number of monkeys who use an infinite number of word processors to write this thank you. ☺

Visualization is an interesting skill, and one that is very difficult to teach to people. It seems to covary pretty well with dream vividness, too.

Also known as F. Bubba and Joe-Doug At The Movies... ☺

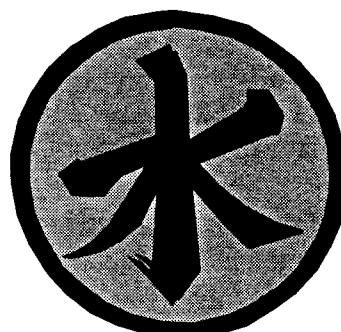
Personally, I'm waiting for *The Shadow* and Troma's *Space Zombie Bingo* to hit the big screen. Hahahahahaha! It's summertime, and the cerebral activity is minimal.

Intriguing that you find role playing improves your ability to visualize settings when you act. I wish there was some sort of standardized measure of visualization, as it would be interesting to see if others shared your experience. Is it the active involvement in the game, I wonder, or would you find the same effect among people who listened to a lot of radio dramas? That is, does the effect arise from having to actively "fill in" the details of a situation without visual cues, or is it from having to deal with the imaginary setting in an active way (unlike radio)? Any thoughts?

**Pili:** Welcome to *Interregnium*! The box-style layouts are very distinctive; really a nice visual signature for your work. Out of curiosity, what are you playing currently?

It just so happens that **F. Bob Mosdal** and I slunk out to the theater a few weeks back to catch a cheap matinee of *The Crow*. I agree with your assessment that it was better than either of the *Batman* movies. Watching it was rather distracting, as the screenplay departed from Jamie O'Barr's graphic novel in many significant ways. John Shirley managed to imprint some of his regular fixations on the script (esp. the bit about eyes), but much of the new material (like the closing fight at the church) didn't add to the story. It was worth the couple bucks we paid just for the big shoot-out at the club, however. Music from My Life With The Thrill Kill Cult goes so well with full-auto weapons fire. And I'm sure it's only a matter of time before punk wanna-bes start stage diving from third story windows. ☺ What I really want to know, though, is what is the stopping power of duct tape? It seemed to work wonders for Mr. Lee's character. I'll have to try that in my next *Cyberpunk* game...

**SEE, PETE? AN EVEN NUMBER OF PAGES!**



# REFUGEE # -1

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The contents of this zine include fiction and commentary. I will include *Communications* Letters to the Editor, in which I publish letters or comments from correspondents, if by some chance I ever receive one.

## Commentationes

I am very short of time this month, so only a few brief comments.

*Editorial Page:* Technology. The novel that I have been waving at people has lots of technology, some of it very strange. Gifts — the ability to fly, e.g. — are actually technological artifacts, though no one in the bulk of Comet's world suspects this truth. Technology is also used in the publishing process. I am writing using PC-Write version 2.7, which produces ASCII files that are pushed through LaTeX (a postprocessor) and printed at 600 DPI using an HP4 laserprinter. Alas, xeroxing does not treat my typeface ideally; I do not have a good solution. A better typeface would help if I had a clue where to look.

*The Log That Flies:* Rumor had it that the last ST:TNG had an ecological collapse of the universe due to warp drive, or something else equally bizarre. True? One might argue that Tolkein and Heinlein, in their ways, were also important at getting SF into the mainstream to the extent that it is. Until recently, roughly a quarter of the books on the NY Times best seller lists were SF. This has recently ceased to be true, the number falling. They were not books that most of us, I suspect, would view as top level SF. The

Times even had a rare book review column on SF titles, though the reviewers choice of titles was highly individual. Of the SF authors I think of as first line, I do not recall ever seeing a review of a single book by McKillip, Scott, Hambly, Shwartz, Hogan, or Rawn, to name six. Rawn is perhaps underappreciated; her works have hundreds of characters and are of a traditional Russian scale. At the other end, we do not see a mention of BattleTech or Wing Commander novels (even Forstchen, who is usually very good, couldn't bring off one of those well.) Glad to hear that you liked Who Slays Satan.

*Fastest Tentacle in the West:* Sounds very clever. Perhaps not quite enough conflicts between the players, though I may be influenced by my Paranoia gamesmastering.

*Who is John Galt?* Nice layout and graphics. Laser print works wonders.

*Aye, Matey?* The survivalists are even funnier than the cthulhoid westerners. It seems to me that possible SF has peaked out in the last few years. I have an increasing number of books that I have started and tossed rather than finishing. Perhaps I am being more explorative. I have had a few things I enjoyed enough to re-read, which I rarely do. Turtledove's Worldwar in the Balance (1942 Earth invaded by outerspace aliens whose military technology is only somewhat developed — competitive with 1994 in some ways and ahead it in others.) There have been a series of military space epics recently of variable quality. The Honor Harrington series is the best of that lot, I think, recalling that the author does not control covers. The worst of the lot, to my taste, is "The Siege", though the Wing Commander books are pretty close. The author of the Siege is copying WW2 events, not even bothering to change location names, so when the space naxis invade the space Russians, ummh Bears (whose internal politics is WW1, not WW2, not that this affects the battlefronts), the town names are the same. Imagine, a major space battle at a world called Bialystok.

*The Skeleton Key:* Interesting question about

obeying laws. Once upon a time I had a biologist PC in a campaign with cthulhoids, evil trolls and elves, etc. The campaign was set in modern Boston. My PC dutifully argued that rare creatures were covered by the endangered species act, and that the observation that most trolls are carnivores does not justify race discrimination against them. The late GM was not amused.

*8-Track Mind:* Many thanks for the Zine addresses. I collect, you see. I confess that I no longer have the patience for television. Once upon a time, say when I was in fourth grade, I dutifully watched the SF TV shows, all one of them each year (no one else remembers Captain Zero). I preferred Lost in Space to Star Trek, though I aware of the flaws, and then I lost interest. I think I've managed to see STTNG, SQ, and L&C each a couple of times. I never saw War of the Worlds (though I though the movie and original book were great, the core plot of the TV show was stupid beyond belief. Here we are, 40 years after most of our cities were levelled, while Lancaster CA was nuked by the USA, and people can't be bothered with the possibility that the Martians are back? And no one is interested in reverse engineering their technology? This is just plain dumb.

wrto Jorl, it helps to have a GM who is vaguely interested in being cooperative. If the GM isn't, it doesn;t matter what you do. At least with dice-based combat you can tell fairly whether you hit the target or not.

*Session Notes:* Thanks for the remark on Pickering et al. I agree it is difficult to roleplay children. With respect to the new cyberetc rules, I'm not sure that the violence level is higher than your archetypical medieval rules. However, the cyberpunk future is so gloomy as to repel. As I look at scenarios I see, I am overwhelmed by the supply of bar scenes and rock musicians. My own experience is that most people in bars are somewhat sloshed, and unlikely to be worth talking to, while most hard rock music differs from white noise only in minor technical details. Thus, what I encounter I don't like in general, making it dif-

ficult for me to get further interested in the plot.

As a minority, perhaps, I would maintain that superhero material is science fiction as covered on the screen, no better or worse than other examples. It's what you provide for plots, not what plot hooks are used, that matters. I confess that I have seen few efforts to translate comics to prose. The novelizations of the superman et al movies were fairly flat. Wild Cards was an interesting idea, pushed in odd directions; it wandered more in grim-and-gritty directions than I prefer. There is no more written about Camilla – she was a one-shot heroine.

*Distant Deeps and Skies:* The Arkham/ hypnotist theme was very well carried out. The volume was dangers. One feels pity for the poor Brother. Running a Cthulhu LARP event is a bit difficult, since a key part of that theme in general is that the characters do not know what they are facing. Of course, you could run a murder mystery LARP, tell people that there was a mad scientist wandering around, and neglect to mention that the Mad Scientist looked like a hypertrophied star mole. I see that there are plot hooks, but what is the plot?

*Strange Sands :* Your introduction to yourself was very good. I have nothing so interesting or exotic in my background, at least if you neglect my late grandfather's claim to be descended from the last Grand Admiral of Byzantium. (My living grandfather fought in WW1, for the AustroHungarians, and had a variety of interesting tales, including almost being framed and shot for cowardice. I have not been published professionally, though my fiction keeps turning up in APAe around the country. I have virtually completed a novel, which will go off to a publisher perhaps about the time that you see this. Oh, the philtre was a working immortality potion. If you are not only assuredly consigned to Hell in the afterlife, but also have managed to erpsonally antagonize its leading residents, potion of immortality is a wise investment.

# the unnamed zine

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I've realized, as time goes by, that just about *anything* can be used in a game. Thus it has been gratifying to discover that *games* can be used for just about *anything* also! I'm one of Dobie's PBEM players, and I recently had to write a 10pg paper for a political science class. With Dobie's permission, I wrote the paper on the interworld political ramifications in his game—it was quite an enjoyable experience! So I present the paper here, in the hopes that I will help someone have an idea for their game. After all, I've always believed that the answer to the question "does art imitate life, or life art?" should be both.

Please bear in mind that references in the paper may not make sense out of context. If you wish to look them up, footnotes are included, and if you'd like a more personal response, feel free to either ask me via your zine, or write me on the net—I am <collie@netcom.com>. Enjoy!

## POLITICAL SCIENCE 3 - INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Blythe Collier

*The man in blue raised his eyes from the holo-scan. He idly ran a hand through his graying hair and sighed. "I didn't realize that they were headed Spinwards. Should we call them before they leave?" His companion shook her head. "No. Let them go. Our friends have already risked too much. We're going to have to trust Shaman. May tomorrow bring new rain, if the dance goes well."*

*A smile at a shared joke, a few quick gestures, and the two melted back into the seamless flow of shoppers, browsing amidst the fantastic holo-electronic markets of Kobiyashi.*

This is an exploration of the political ramifications within a science fiction story currently being collaboratively written.<sup>[1]</sup> Initially different models and theories will be applied to the story, which hopefully will demonstrate a grasp of these. Once they are delineated, some prognostication will be attempted, using the previously outlined information. Thus this paper will be "...describing what has happened and is happening,

predicting what will happen, and prescribing policy."<sup>[2]</sup> An attempt will also be made, when applicable, to show these models and theories in all three levels of analysis that Rourke mentions: system level, state-level, and individual-level.<sup>[3]</sup>

Because the story is still in the process of being written, there is a necessarily fluid feel to some of the information, which should make it not unlike the present day, as far as predictions and prescriptions. Also, the story is being written from the first person. Thus many of the observations will reveal a personal bias, and there are holes that occasionally appear at some levels of analysis, since, of course, some of these questions just never came up in the protagonist's life. Finally, for ease of writing, each planet will be considered a distinct nation/state, unless otherwise indicated.

Let us first take the six major themes of world politics, and apply them to the situation in the story. These themes are: Conflict or Cooperation, the Realigning Power Structure, the North-South Axis, the Changing Nature of Power, the Pace of Change, and Reality Modified by Perception.<sup>[4]</sup>

Conflict would appear to be the order of the day. Currently, the Alliance has openly broken away from the Hegemony, and is actively wooing both the Axis and other Hegemonic nations to join it. The Axis has not yet decided to move, but indications are that a 'wait and see' attitude is currently prevailing. The Hegemony is reacting with violence - no attempt to diplomatically solve the complaints of the Alliance is being made. Rather it is being treated as a provincial brush war, and Hegemony forces are trying to stamp it out.

*Apollo Naval Station - Commander Leto Ajal confirmed reports that additional corvettes and two heavy cruisers, the Palomino and the Republic, were dispatched to troubled areas in the frontier worlds.*

*The Realigning Power Structure is quite evident. Initially a bi-polar division of power existed, between the Axis and the Hegemony. The Axis was too small for an attack on the Hegemony, but also too powerful for the Hegemony to simply roll over them. The Hegemony's response to the Axis was to blockade them, making a situation that can perhaps be better described*

*Hegemony's response to the Axis was to blockade them, making a situation that can perhaps be better described as unipolar—the embargo prevented the Axis from really participating as a pole in the political power system. This situation existed in relative stability for about 70 years, but recently a new pole, the Alliance, has manifested. This has caused the current, unstable, bipolar situation.*

The North-South Axis does not, strictly speaking exist—this is a series of star systems, after all. However, the core worlds of the Hegemony were the ones first settled by the Terran Directorate.[5] These worlds are the oldest, and in some respects the most advanced economically. They also consider themselves the cultural center of the Hegemony. The Hegemony core worlds are also, in general, physically closer together, allowing a high level of interdependence. The Alliance worlds, on the other hand, are seen as frontier worlds, and due to the vagaries of jump points, are “further apart”, as far as travel time and available trading partners are concerned. Thus they are often less powerful than the core Hegemony worlds. They are consequently treated with slightly less respect than they feel they should be shown. Referring to this situation as a Core-Frontier Axis might be more accurate.

The Changing Nature of Power is demonstrated by the current political situation between the three poles. The Hegemony has a large and well equipped Navy—it is currently depending on its military, or command power,[6] to insure its continued rule. Its lack of concern for the economic and other problems of the now-Alliance worlds has caused that political entity to form. Indeed, it is the Alliance's co-optive power[7] which is causing the Alliance to grow at such a rapid rate. And it is the Alliance's active attempts to induce the Axis to aid them that has made the Axis once again important—even if the power of the Axis remains only potential, it is still a threat to the Hegemony.

The Pace of Change is increasing, interestingly enough, precisely because of the strained relationships that exist between the Axis and the Hegemony. The best descriptive for their current situation is a cold war. The Hegemony wishes to emulate the sciences of the Ganthan Axis, in order to prepare for war with the Axis. Thus there has been a scientific thrust to decipher these secrets, causing some unusual creations as a side effect. Indeed, even though it is illegal in the Hegemony, genetic manipulation is seen as the new frontier in weaponry, along with the (legal) exploration of high-energy weapons.

Over the last century there have also been a fair number of advances in technology and communication.

As an example, before the Hegemony was created communication was limited by the speed of the ships, which usually took a week or so to travel a few parsecs. Ship speeds have increased somewhat. However, this has been overshadowed by the discovery of the means of FTL communication. This breakthrough dramatically expanded the range at which maintaining a cohesive government was feasible. FTL messages travel about 1 parsec a day, whereas the average ship can travel only 3 to 4 parsecs in a week. This is obviously much faster than a ship. However, FTL communication and travel, while easy, is not cheap.

Reality Modified By Perception can be demonstrated via the “two quick points” Rourke mentions.[8] The first point is that perceptions often distort reality. Thus the Hegemony's desire to prepare for war is due to its view of the Axis. When they look at the Axis they see an unfamiliar and to them bizarre culture, descended from sleeper ships filled with criminals, political dissidents, and the insane, and bred to inherent ferocity by the rigors of the planets they live on. To them, the Axis peoples are barbaric—the Ganthans haven't even outlawed nuclear fission weaponry yet! The Axis, on the other hand, sees the Hegemony as the ‘Imperials at the door’ forcing an embargo. To the Axis, the Hegemony, appears to be trying to use their military might to stifle the Axis into accepting a subordinate, colony position within the Hegemony. Indeed, it is the embargo itself which embodies Rourke's second point—action is based on perception. That, and the constant, fevered preparations of both sides for incipient war—a war which both sides both fear and do not really want.

## DISTRIBUTION OF POWER

After the authoritarian Terran Directorate was overthrown, there was a *long* period of anarchy and collapse. The alliance which deposed the Directorate could not decide on a mutually agreeable new form of government. Humanity descended into technological decline, cultural stagnation, and barbarism. After about eighty years, trade networks arose which eventually coalesced into two main governmental bodies—the Centauran Hegemony and the League of Worlds. The Centauran Hegemony was a more capitalistic entity, and averaged a higher income for its citizenry than did the League. The League of Worlds, effectively a socialist democracy, eventually bankrupted itself, and was forced to turn to the Centauran Hegemony for assistance. The League was eventually absorbed by the Centaurans, and the modern Hegemony is the result.

The Hegemony's economic policies lie somewhere between those of its predecessors; it is more socialist than the Centauran Hegemony, but more capitalist than the League.

Initially, the Hegemony was exactly what its name implies—a universal empire. It was, obviously, a unipolar system. This new unipolarity lasted unchallenged for about 30 years, and during this time the Hegemony was trying to find all the “lost worlds”. These were worlds with which contact had been lost, due to the Directorate war, lack of technology, disaster, or some other problem. It was at this time the Axis world Gantha was rediscovered. Due to a lack of effective diplomatic communication and a brief bit of military skirmishing, the Hegemony rapidly realized it had a real problem on its hands. It chose to isolate this problem, something that was possible due to the odd nature of jump points. The Axis was successfully contained, via embargo. The perception, at least, of unipolarity for the Hegemony was preserved.

However, the Axis is still there, a looming menace on the metaphorical horizon. There has now been about a century of Hegemony power, and the Hegemony itself is starting to fragment. The days of stable unipolarity have come to an end. With the advent of the Alliance, distribution of power among the actors has become a new, fluid, uncertain situation. Indeed, relative power cannot even be judged accurately. Is there a situation of relative power equality or inequality? True, the Axis is currently under embargo. But is it simply waiting for the proper moment to strike? Also, the Alliance is still a relative unknown. How many worlds truly are within its regime? Will it suddenly gain more, or will they defect at the Hegemony's shows of force? And finally, it has been a *long* time since such a problem has arisen. Is the Hegemony still a dangerous military force to be reckoned with, or is it merely a paper tiger?

No-one is sure what exactly will result. Will there be a tri-polar system, with its concurrently more stable structure? Or will the Axis remain unable or unwilling to become involved, resulting in a tenuous, bi-polar system for however long it takes for the Hegemony to declare war on the Alliance? If this happens, will anything remain?

*The Ganthan straightens up, and looks at Thora closely. “If there are clear heads in the Ga’sheknam [the Axis ruling body], then they would stand aside and watch the two of them blast each other into dust.” His voice is distant and sad. “Distrust, in the Axis, runs deep. Never forget, never forgive. The imperial power at our gates.”*

All this is occurring against a backdrop of constant change. There have been many swift changes in the past century; changes in technology, in economics, in social relations, and in power. The universe has, once again, the possibility of nuclear war looming over it. Indeed, the devastation possible by nuclear attack boggles the mind—ships exist with the capability to destroy entire planets. Travel times have not decreased tremendously, but travel itself, while expensive, is easy, and progress is being made to speed up international travel. Communications between nations and individuals, while expensive, are relatively immediate. Economic interdependence is a *strong* factor in the reluctance of many nations to involve themselves in the Alliance—most worlds survive solely because of their trade partners, and self-sufficiency is a thing of the past—the new claim to “self-sufficiency” of the Alliance is due only to their being part of a small trading group of worlds that do not need to traffic outside their little regional organization. Indeed, the main problem within the Hegemony seems initially to be the lack of increased international cooperation—the Hegemony may be a UN equivalent, but it has become almost colonial, with Proxima Centauri receiving a lion's share of respect, tribute, and power, and not apparently returning the favor.

## SYSTEM-LEVEL ANALYSIS

And now a bit of system-level analysis: who are the actors? There are three categories, those being national actors, supranational actors, and transnational actors.[9] In the category of national actors would fall all the individual worlds. These are individual nations, but they do not fulfill Rourke's definition of states. To whit, they are territorially based political organizations, but they are not sovereign. True, they have theoretical equality with all other states, but they are not independent. It is not yet known if the Alliance and Axis worlds follow this pattern. Current indications would say they are true states—they maintain sovereignty.

There are several obvious supranational actors, notably the Hegemony, the Alliance, and the Axis. These three fulfill Rourke's definitions for supranational actors.[10] The Hegemony, as stated above, is similar to the UN—an example of a general-purpose, universal organization. It represents a "...whole [which is] greater than the sum of its parts, an organization to which countries surrender all or part of their sovereignty, and an organization to which member states are at least somewhat subordinate.”[11]

A good example of a regional organization is the Ganthan Axis. Due to its placement and the bottle-neck only one jump point gives it, it has evolved into a mutually supportive cluster of apparently independent states. The most obvious example of this is the holonet linking these worlds. It is a multi-purpose communication net, and the very closeness of the region is what makes it work—were the Axis more physically scattered, the holonet would not be powerful enough to link all the worlds. The merchant marine is another example—thousands of small ships traveling from world to world, serving as transporters of goods, people, and information, and as first warning against the “Imperial Menace”.

Unsurprisingly, the Alliance is an example of an alliance based supranational organization. It has become a sort of economic and ideologically defensive association that stresses co-operation against the Hegemony. It is *very* loosely held together, and so far the only true assistance manifested has been economic. However, the thoughtless ferocity shown by the Hegemony so far may well cause it not only to firm up its mutual pacts, but also to start other means of cooperation besides economic, such as military means. Indeed it is the Alliance’s current wooing of the Axis for military aid that is currently most worrying to the Hegemony.

*Geneva - A police crackdown on a student demonstration left thirty students in serious condition, in what student Senate leader Aimee Garrison referred to as “the worst abuse of power by the state over its subjects in the last forty years.” Over a hundred students were detained, three buildings were heavily damaged and classes were suspended until further notice. Student computer annexes at the University were shut down despite protest by the Provost. Political Science Professor Lars Vassau stated, “The imperative for self rule cannot be quenched. Either there will be a dialogue, or things will only get worse.”*

There are many regimes[12] in the universe. Most noteworthy currently is the slowly shattering Hegemonic regime. The Hegemony’s beliefs concerning economic and military power, and its use thereof, has alienated two strong factions. One is the Axis, and the Hegemony protected itself by isolating the Axis. However, it is the newly forming regime of the Alliance’ desire for more economic freedom that is helping to dismantle the old regime. What will become of these different belief systems in the current times of turmoil is anyone’s guess.

Some examples of transnational actors are intergovernmental organizations, or IGOs, and non-governmental organizations, or NGOs. An example of an IGO would currently be the Alliance. It is an economic group of nations, working towards more sovereignty. It is also, if you ask the Hegemony’s opinion, illegal. There is also a general agreement on tariffs and protectionism in place, which might be considered an IGO, but it is constantly being debated, moreso now due to the Alliance’s apparent birth.

There are also many NGOs in the universe. For example, there are several Hegemonic merchant associations, such as the Independent Merchant Collective, or IMC. There are some system-spanning religions, one of which is the V’shanti, or Odysseans, as they prefer to be called. Both of these are public NGOs that anyone can join. An example of a more private transnational organization is the Kastellan Corporation. They are the ship builders for the universe, and keep a tight hold on that position.[13]

## STATE-LEVEL ANALYSIS

Now a closer look at some of the international actors. Firstly, most worlds are a single nation-state, although there are some multi-state worlds. Also, there are a limited number of usable worlds. Usually there is only one world per star system, although there are commonly satellites and stations scattered throughout. Currently the Hegemony has control over 26 systems, the Axis has 12, and the Alliance 14, although information about the Alliance is always uncertain.

Simple statistics give a view of powerful, wide-spreading Hegemonic control, and that view probably contributes to the Hegemony’s formidable reputation—an example of perception influencing reality. In actuality the number of livable worlds is not so impressive. At least three or four of the Hegemony systems are trinary sun systems with no habitable planets, and are used for Naval simulations and the like. A few others are remote research/mining outposts, and at least a third of the Hegemony worlds are on the frontier, lack resources, or are still developing and growing. Also the Hegemony has devoted itself towards maintaining internal stability and promoting economic growth, rather than physically expanding its power. Expansion is *very* slow—here simply aren’t that many human-suitable worlds. Many colonies and worlds are on planets whose atmospheres can best be described as inimicable to human life. The further from human-suitable the world is, the longer it takes to establish a viable colony.

Governments, unsurprisingly, vary widely from world to world. The Hegemony itself is a republic, though there are a number of its worlds, especially ones that want to break away from it, that are more authoritarian. The level of democracy on any given world in the Hegemony varies widely, ranging from Athenian level participant democracy to representative democracy. How representative the elected are is another matter. On some worlds they are generally seen as honest and hard working, on others they seem to be continuously re-elected, and reforms are slow in coming.

The Axis is less well known, but they also seem to have a representative form of government. The governing group is referred to as the Ga'sheknam. As one of the characters in the story puts it:

*"The heads of families vote for the families, and often pick related heads of larger families to vote for them, and so on. It is a duty to participate in the shaping of laws and customs. The electronic web that girds each world is our forum; the wisest or eldest, or sometimes loudest, taking power. It is custom, tradition, and debate." He rolls his eyes. "A lot."*

The Alliance is the least known of the three emerging international actors. It also seems to have the least cohesiveness—indeed there is constant debate as to who is actually part of the Alliance, although its sphere of influence appears to be growing. It is mainly the economic/technological giants of the outer fringe that are pushing for independence. It has been noticed that a fair number of the fringe worlds are simply quietly going their own way. These tend to be the smaller, less vital worlds that have either been recently settled, or are not important enough for the Hegemony to run Naval checks on every now and then. But worlds like Parkatha, which have become as powerful as a core-world, or the advanced corpocracy of Carthage, or Geneva, with its renown institute, are all worlds that the Hegemony has a great deal invested in, and does not wish to have defect.

Let us move to subnational actors. Rourke mentions several types of subnational actors, including political leadership, bureaucracies, legislatures, political opposition, interest groups, and the people.[14] These can be most easily examined within the Hegemony, since it is the most well known regime currently. However, both the Alliance and the Hegemony have several subnational actors in common. On the whole, the political leadership of both regimes is indeed the strongest subnational actor in the field of policy making. A bureaucracy and a legislature of some sort exists on most worlds, with varying degrees of power

and influence. Political opposition is usually within the regime, and usually merely wishes to change policy. However, when one comes to the governmental influence wielded by interest groups and by the people, the Alliance and the Hegemony start to differ more strongly.

*She glances at the vid automatically—what's so interesting? It appears to be an offworld newscast documenting the latest results of the Council of Worlds elections. Oh. Them. Yawn. Didn't he know the elections were mostly decided beforehand? She smiles wryly to herself... probably not.*

Interest groups come in many types. In a sense, the Alliance itself could be said to be an economic interest group that got tired of the marked lack of interest shown by the Hegemony capital, and decided it needed to control its own economy. To do so, it simply disassociated from the current international government. On the other end of the spectrum is the Kastellan Corporation, a good example of a powerful business related interest group. Kastellan is a fairly major player on the market, and they most certainly influence local policy strongly—Kastellan ships form the majority of the Hegemony Navy. These two examples illustrate the difference between the Alliance and Hegemony interest groups. The Hegemony group chose to work within the current system—the Alliance interest group became the government.

The influence and regard for the people differs within the Hegemony and the Alliance also. Because of its basically democratic nature, the Hegemony must listen to the people. This is not to say that there are no elites carefully differentiating themselves from the masses—the Hegemony capital of Proxima Centauri considers itself a cultural and political elite within the Hegemony, and the planet itself has its own carefully preserved core of power mongers. Also the Hegemonic worlds all vary in how much attention is paid to the people's desires, as can be seen by the differing forms of mostly democratic governments on the various worlds. But elections are held—the people do have some say in their own government. In the Alliance, however, the degree of attention paid to the desires of the people differs widely depending on which planet you are on. Worlds such as Parkatha and Carthage are almost feudal in their lack of regard for public opinion.

## INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL ANALYSIS

In order to take a more individual level analysis, the universe will be seen from the perspective of the story's protagonist. Thora is the daughter of the owner of, and one of the controlling stock-holders of, Kastellan Corporation, one of the mega-system corporations. Its sphere of influence is simply staggering. Her parent's company, which she helps to run, has more income than some systems—it is an NGO, and she is one of the elite. Her background will obviously cause some slanting in perspective—and this should be kept in mind during examination of individuals.

There are three approaches to individual-level analysis.<sup>[15]</sup> These are Nature-of-Humankind, Humans-in- Organizations, and Humans-as-Individuals. We can find examples of each in the story. For example, examination of Nature-of-Humankind will show that one of the general characteristics of decision making is relying on historical analogies. The Hegemony is doing this—it has always quashed rebellion successfully. At the worst, it has isolated what it considered dangerous cultures, preventing them from becoming a partner in the Hegemony—it was avoiding uncomfortable information. Thus its history has always been one of successful defense of itself. It currently seems to consider the Alliance a group of upstart malcontents that will dissipate once a show of force has been made. It may well find that the historical analogy is inexact, at best.

Humans-in-Organizations can be shown by the Hegemony's attempts to keep the Alliance from truly splitting away. The Hegemony is, in a sense, trying to force consensus on the Alliance. It is limiting the policy choices available to the Alliance by using military responses in order to suppress dissidents. The Alliance, however, is resisting group-think, and the Hegemony may find that its poor decisions in handling this situation will cause policy failure.

An example of how Humans-as-Individuals can shape policy is provided by the protagonist of the story. In a move to promote closer ties between the Hegemony core worlds and Parkatha, a political marriage was arranged between her and Joran, the inheriting son of one of the most powerful families on Parkatha. This would have been fine, were it not for the spoiled and childish nature of the son. Her refusal to marry him, while not yet made public, has caused embarrassment and political difficulty. Parkatha is now strongly considering joining the Alliance.

*Thora's smile widens, "Who would I like instead of Joran?" She laughs. "How about someone I can respect? Someone who wants to work with me, instead of wear me like a bauble?"*

### REALISM VS. IDEALISM

Realists believe "... struggles between states to secure their frequently conflicting national interests are the main action on the world stage."<sup>[16]</sup> The Hegemony and the Alliance both can be described as students of realistic foreign policy. The Hegemony actively quashes military struggle, but seems to take a laissez faire attitude towards economic struggle. The Alliance could be argued to have a similar philosophy, both because it is descended from the Hegemony, and due to the reasons people believe are motivating it to split from the Hegemony. For example, it is a desire to gain power in its anti-Hegemonic struggle which is causing it to make diplomatic advances to the Axis—previously contact with the Axis was unthinkable. Politics does indeed make strange bedfellows.

The Axis appears to be a good example of an idealistic society. Its current policies seem to be "... formulated according to cooperative and ethical standards."<sup>[17]</sup> However, it is the lack of a common standard of morality with the Hegemony that seems to be causing much of the current tension. After 70 years of stalemate, cooperation does not seem incipient either.

## NATIONALISM

Nationalism has helped to create some of the problems facing the Hegemony and the Alliance today. It is insularity, however slight, which causes the Hegemony core worlds to be so indifferent to the concerns of the frontier worlds. There is also an element of believed Hegemonic cultural superiority involved. Due to their distance, none of the frontier worlds were considered that important. Since the core worlds are safe within their shell of superiority, a certain amount of xenophobia has developed—a sort of resentful attitude towards those strange people from the frontier. It is their own inherent belief in their own superiority that motivates much of their foreign policy. They are, to some degree, messianic.

However, it must be admitted that the Hegemony worlds encourage democracy and self-determination. It is through their active encouragement of economic interdependence that the ideals of the Hegemony have been spread. Also, the large number of worlds in the Hegemony has allowed for quite a bit of cultural

diversity and experimentation. So nationalism, while the cause of some of the Hegemony's current problems, has also been a helpful tool in increasing the Hegemony's reach and power.

Parkatha is a world teetering between open rebellion against, and support of the Hegemony, however grudging. It will serve as an example of nationalism, and perhaps incipient statehood. Firstly, the Parkathans are a nation—they share cultural, historical, and ancestral similarities. Also, there is a perceived feeling of community on Parkatha. They are acutely aware of how much more they have in common with each other, rather than with the distant and culturally different Hegemony. There is also a desire to be separate—they wish sovereignty over their economic destiny. Should Parkatha formally join the Alliance, it will have become a nation-state. How long it will be able to maintain that status is a different question entirely.

## POWER

It is hard to determine the relative power of the three major regimes. However, they can be used to illustrate types of power. The Hegemony is a good example of real power. It has many elements of tangible power, such as a strong military, the barrier of a single jump point between it and the Axis (its main enemy), technological sophistication, strong information and communication capabilities amongst all its worlds, an apparently impregnable financial position, prodigious natural resources, and impressive industrial and agricultural output. Intangible power is demonstrated by the high morale of its people and military, and its reputation.

The Axis is an example of perceived power. Due to the ferocity of their response to being invaded, their use of nuclear weaponry, and their unconventional guerrilla tactics, they were blockaded. The fear of the Axis "barbarians" has lasted 70 years, and is still strong enough that most Hegemony worlds consider them more of a threat than the current Alliance rebellion. The Axis has a formidable reputation, not without cause, as being a place that breeds fierce fighters—and its military has *incredible* morale, due somewhat to the Hegemony providing the Axis with an enemy to band together against. Technologically it is somewhat more advanced than the Hegemony worlds, having made extensive advances in the fields of cybertechnology and nanotechnology. Its information and communication capabilities tie its worlds together as effectively as the Hegemony's, and its interplanetary transportation system is based on captured Hegemony technology. Its

natural resources lean heavily to metals, and the Hegemony is uncomfortably aware how useful that would be in a war.

*"Weaponry? It's too bad that is all most of your people know of us." The Ganthan sighs and shakes his head slowly.*

Potential power is demonstrated by the Alliance. In spite of its current apparent disorganization, it has the ability to become a force to be reckoned with. It is growing, both in tangible and intangible power. As worlds join, its population, resources, and economic power increases. Its communications, informational, and technological capabilities are currently at least as strong as those of the Hegemony. If it plays its cards right, the various interstellar transportation networks will continue to serve it as well as the Hegemony. The major problem facing the Alliance in the immediate future seems to be if it can maintain or even increase its current levels of power and growth without the assistance and cooperation of the Hegemony.

## INTERNATIONAL LAW

The Hegemony Charter of Stars is an example of international treaty. It binds all the worlds under a common constitution, and *is pacta sunt servanda*.<sup>[18]</sup> Beyond that each world has its own set of laws, although war between member worlds is forbidden. The Charter is enforced via economic sanction, which has until now been a perfectly adequate means of constraint. The new Alliance, however, not only does not adhere to the precepts of the Charter, but is in the process of forming its own economically self-sufficient network.

International custom can be demonstrated by two examples. One is the current rules against research into chemical and biological weaponry. This is not to say that no-one does it, but public opinion and economic sanctions would be brought to bear against any world so foolish as to be caught in such acts. The other is the standard of free trade between worlds—not only does the Hegemony encourage this, but too much protectionism could cause a nation an uncomfortable economic backlash from other, affected nations. There is also a general principle of law—physical might, at least, does not make right... unless you are the Hegemony!

Unfortunately, the role international law plays in the Axis is still under discussion. However, it might be logical to assume, in such a representative form of government, with a society which encourages

cooperation, that some form of international custom has arisen, based perhaps on adjudication.

## DIPLOMACY

There are several practices in the Hegemony which indicate that it participates in "new diplomacy".[19] Obviously, in the Hegemony multilateral diplomacy is the norm—international cooperation has become a necessity. A certain amount of democratization has caused diplomats to be more representative of their planets of origin. Diplomatic growth due to increased numbers of worlds has been slow, but increases in power of the various colonies has caused an expansion of scope. Also, most Hegemonic economic agreements are arrived at via open diplomacy. Public diplomacy occurs because of the advances in communications—leaders and other diplomats are in the public view more than ever before.

The Hegemony's attempts at diplomacy with the Axis failed because they didn't follow the rules of effective diplomacy. Initially they were dogmatic. The Axis was presented with, basically, an ultimatum—become a client state, and we will sell you ships with FTL capabilities. When the Axis decided not to become a client state, but rather to seek their own path, the Hegemony responded unrealistically. The Axis was composed of worlds the Hegemony considered hellish—heavy gravity, radioactive, and poisonous. Yet the Hegemony tried to invade. Unfortunately their goals outstripped their ability to achieve them. They did not understand the Axis culture, nor did they search for common interests. Once war had broken out, there was no compromise possible, and no avenue of retreat open to the Hegemony. About the only thing that can be said for the Hegemony's attempts at diplomacy is that they have been implacably patient in maintaining the blockade.

## COERCION

In a system-level analysis, the current rebellion could be said to be caused by a power vacuum. The Hegemony, by not paying enough attention to the frontier worlds, has caused some of them to unite in an attempt to fill the niche left by the Hegemony's absence. There is also the fact that the current time is a period of power transition. The Hegemony, a declining state, is striking at the Alliance in order to preserve its previous power.

*From a state-level viewpoint, economic factors can be blamed for the current unrest. The Alliance*

*does not believe it needs the Hegemony, and does not appreciate the somewhat imperialistic attitude the Hegemony often manifests. Nationalism too is causing strain between the Hegemony and the Alliance—the nations of the Alliance want sovereignty.*

When looking at the Axis, at least at first viewing, the theory of a nation's political structure or resources causing it to become more aggressive is not born out. The Axis has the raw resources and technological know-how to create a formidable war machine. There is also an apparent cultural trait of aggression which would seem to predispose the Axis to war-like behavior. Yet it has not initiated armed conflict. Indeed it is the Hegemony which is apparently trying to provoke open warfare—in this case, with the Alliance, and previously with the Axis.

If human aggression stemming from stress, anxiety, or frustration is a cause of war, as individual-level analysis would indicate, then the current Hegemony-Alliance situation is easily explained. It will be interesting to see if 70 years of being barricaded will cause the Axis to explode out into open warfare at the apparent distraction of the Hegemony.

*The Ganthan's voice is distant and sad.  
"Distrust, in the Axis, runs deep. Never forget, never forgive. The imperial power at our gates."*

It will also be interesting to see how the Axis responds to the Alliance advances. The Axis has several levels of response open to it. It is already being perceived by the Hegemony as a diplomatic backdrop for the Alliance. Should it decide to become more involved, it could serve as a source of supply of both weaponry and perhaps military forces to the Alliance—the Axis is behind in biosciences, in comparison to the Hegemony. It would probably be glad to participate in such an exchange. If the Axis decided it wished to participate more obviously in the war against the Hegemony, it would definitely send forces. This would be an overt threat to the Hegemony. However, the Axis would probably skip a limited demonstration of its capabilities—the Hegemony is already fearful of the Axis. Instead, the Axis would probably move directly to action.

## PROGNOSTICATIONS

The Hegemony and the Alliance will move to open war. With a little covert assistance from the Axis, the Alliance will be persuaded to keep up the military attacks long after common sense would indicate to both sides that stopping would be in their best interests. The Axis aid will remain covert because openly allying

with the Alliance would cause the Hegemony to also attack the Axis. A two front war would be hard on the Hegemony, but why should the Axis risk possible injury when it can get the Alliance to do all the attacking?

The Hegemony is a little too big to be utterly destroyed by the Alliance, but it will certainly be significantly decimated after an extended war. The Alliance will be in worse condition—it started out the conflict smaller than the Hegemony. Without the aid of the Axis, the Alliance worlds will fall to squabbling amongst themselves, and eventually will cease to be a power. It is at this point that the Axis has to make a decision. It can either smash the Hegemony, thus insuring there will never be another blockade. Or it can ally with the remains of the Alliance, accomplishing the same goal, but more slowly and less painfully.

Of course, this does not factor in the effects of individuals. Should Thora pull her family into current politics, a very different picture can emerge. The political problem facing Thora currently consists of her indecision as to which way to throw her considerable clout. She knows that her family can and has affected, and indeed on occasion helped formulate, Hegemony policy. Therefore, she has the potential to do both a lot of good, and a lot of harm. Which it will end up being is something that concerns her greatly.

She could simply marry the eldest son of the major Parkathan family. This would create, possibly, the following scenario: A strong tie is forged between the Hegemony and Parkatha, and the Alliance loses a *powerful* potential ally. There is a safe jump point into nearby Alliance space, and a sudden increase in Hegemony interest, both economic and military, in the area. Thora uses her family's economic clout as an interest group to push for a less coercive diplomacy, and persuades the Hegemony to at least let the Alliance try out the sovereignty it is demanding. She also points out the technological and economic losses the Alliance will suffer from loss of Hegemony trade. The Axis does not see the Alliance as being powerful enough to challenge the Hegemony, and is reluctant to lend too much aid.

For a short period the Alliance grows. However, it is cut off from the Hegemony worlds, and rapidly starts to fall behind technologically and economically. At some point the Alliance's growth spurt fizzles out. It has been prevented from increasing its sphere of influence by both the Hegemony military, *and* the fact that nations can easily see the Alliance nations are falling behind. As it becomes less of a threat to the Hegemony, the Axis becomes increasingly reluctant to

be involved—there are only so many technological secrets it wishes to “leak”, after all. After a little more time, internal squabbles start to disrupt the Alliance. Some of its nations sue to return to the Hegemony, and are extremely grateful—especially when the Hegemony military prevents retribution from former Alliance allies. The Alliance eventually collapses, and at least for a while, the status quo is maintained.

However, to Thora this merely postpones the problem. She would much rather try to solve it. Her situation is also complicated by friendship with a Ganthan—increasingly she is having problems seeing the Axis people as barbaric marauders. She knows that the Hegemony is loosely based on democratic principles, and that democracies are usually less war-like cultures. She also knows that several of the Alliance main forces have somewhat autocratic governments that have reached economic stature, and do not wish to have that power infringed upon in any way. She sees the current situation as a bi-polar system which is currently unstable, and drifting towards war. She doesn't believe she can suddenly re-create a uni-polar system, and she doesn't think trying for a multi-polar system would be either prudent or feasible. However, a tri-polar system is a definite possibility.

There are several reasons why she believes this would be a wise choice. One, tri-polar systems are theoretically more stable than bi-polar. Two, an exchange of information between the Hegemony and the Axis would benefit both, in scientific terms. Three, the Axis is possibly more democratically organized than the Hegemony itself—a good ally against some of the autocratic tendencies of the Alliance. And finally, four, the embargo offends her sensibilities as a business woman—there are customers out there, just waiting for her to arrive!

She has several diplomatic options open to her if she does decide to try to woo the Axis. As an apparent private citizen, she gives the Hegemony both deniability, and a chance for private communication between the Hegemony and the Axis. This would be a form of indirect negotiations, but would be necessary, due to the fact that high levels of diplomacy would be unacceptable to the Hegemony public, and might provoke a panicked reaction from the Alliance.

Should she get the Axis to agree to send an emissary to speak with her, it would practically be a given that she would be offering rewards. It would be sheerest folly to try coercive diplomacy—it worked so well *last* time it was tried! She would be communicating probably initially via oral communication, but if possible she would soon move to written agreements.

Signing a written document would be, as far as she can tell, the first step in the Hegemony demonstrating by its actions that it did indeed wish peace with the Axis. Interestingly, she might find herself being quite precise with the Axis representatives, while maintaining a somewhat vague strategy in talking with the Hegemony. This would be due to cultural differences, rather than an attempt to inhibit the diplomatic process.

Thus there emerges a new possibility which might solve the problems currently facing the Hegemony, by creating an ally where before there was only an enemy.

## FOOT-NOTES

1) The collaborator is David Hoberman, <dhoberma@jade.tufts.edu>, and his input has been so constant that an attempt to footnote it all would be impossible. Without his patient help and advice the story would not be nearly so much fun, and this paper would never have seen the light of day. Thanks, Dobie!

2) John T. Rourke, "International Politics on the World Stage" (The Dushkin Publishing Group, Inc., 1993), 26.

3) Rourke, "International Politics on the World Stage", 30.

4) Rourke, "International Politics on the World Stage", 19.

5) The Terran Directorate was the precursor to the Hegemony. It also lasted about a century. It was an autocratic governmental system, which has left the Hegemony with a bit of distaste for excessive government. This may have indirectly caused some of the current unhappiness within the Alliance for the Hegemony.

6) command power: "...the ability to make someone do something based on your more tangible 'hard power resources' such as military and economic might." Rourke, "International Politics on the World Stage".

7) co-optive power: "...the ability to influence others through the attractiveness of your ideas." Rourke, "International Politics on the World Stage".

8) Rourke, "International Politics on the World Stage", 25.

9) Rourke, "International Politics on the World Stage", 58.

10) 1) it has individual countries as members, and 2) some aspects of the organization's authority at least *theoretically* supersede the sovereignty of its individual

members." Rourke, "International Politics on the World Stage", 58.

11) Rourke, "International Politics on the World Stage", 58.

12) "a 'network of rules, norms and procedures that regularize behavior and control its effects' in an area of international concern...." Rourke, "International Politics on the World Stage", 60.

13) see Appendix for more information on these NGOs.

14) Rourke, "International Politics on the World Stage", 101.

15) Rourke, "International Politics on the World Stage", 114.

16) Rourke, "International Politics on the World Stage", 140.

17) Rourke, "International Politics on the World Stage", 144.

18) "pacta sunt servanda": it is binding on the signatories alone. Rourke, "International Politics on the World Stage", 262.

19) "'new diplomacy' is characterized by an expansion of geographic scope, multilateral diplomacy, parliamentarianism, democratization, open diplomacy, leader-to-leader diplomacy, and public diplomacy." Rourke, "International Politics on the World Stage", 286.

# Afflatus

Or...

## My Bonny Lies

© by Eric Robinson

**A**while back Peter Maranci told me of *Interregnum*, the spinoff of *The Wild Hunt*, of which he would be editor. More than aware of Pete's timid lust for power and his unflagging love of RPG's, the news was, I'm almost certain, well received. (But then again, one can quite easily imagine that as his editorial powers expand, the notion of an *interregnum* will become increasingly ironic, and that one day he will ascend, reign as king, and we will have to build a guillotine.)

He also mentioned that he wanted to liberally expand on the content of the zine, to have contributors come to *Interregnum* from outside the ranks of gamers. (But this is such a good plan I am compelled to reassess the virtues of regicide, especially since it is possible to take advantage of this king's generosity. In fact, his glorious labors could be to everyone's benefit. Soon, we could *all* owe him much. Or I could, at least. This is disturbing. And it can be *so* hard not to bite the hand that feeds. . . .)

I have read parts of the first three installments with as much pleasure as any non-gamer can, including those of my friend and co-worker Scott Ferrier, who is a milk-livered barnacle of a man, and would sooner stick a knife in yer back than share the booty of Her Majesty's sunken treasures. . . .

I also perused the Publication Schedule for *Interregnum* #4, and must admit that this submission falls short of the desired topic of Technology. But I can say this: I use an aged Macintosh Plus, rigged to an aged Imagewriter 100. I employ about one-zillionth of its potential, and yet I am a slave to it. If it should break down I would be doomed, since my right hand cannot hold a pen for more than ten minutes without cramping. I drive a car. It is also old and ill-kept. I have a television. It is evil, even when its face is blank. I am terrified of electricity.

E-L-E-C-T-R-I-C-I-T-Y

Which brings me, obtusely, to my story, the result of an electrical discharge: you see, recently I had a dream in which Pete was the star, both rising and falling. He so dazzled the firmament that when I woke I did my best to refrain from probing too far into the imagery or symbolism, of illuminating upon the despair which too often accompanies the content of my nightly emanations. What follows, then, is a rendering of the tone of that dream, but only its first half, the part which I have allowed to be simply Pete, to be simply prose. For Pete can be a Job to those who know him, and now he is also a fiction, which may be more than he can bear. (??)

He can sue me whenever, but censor me... aye Scotty, he is a scurvy dog, is he not?

Is he an editor, or is he an avatar?

## Maranci's Public

**H**e rose from among his colleagues seated on the stage. As he approached the podium the disparate voice of the audience fell to silence, to the rustling of chairs and attentive feet. Even the layers of smoke choking the rafters seemed to

still its wavy currents, held in suspension while he unfolded his notes. A large, imposing man, he suffered nearly endless pain in his lower back and knees, and tonight he leaned against the podium in such a way as to ask it to bear the excess of his tiresome weight. His head, too, seemed unusually burdened, and it slumped down to the microphone as though chains of gold hung off his neck. His sparse, red hair lay pasted to his temples, and sweat rolled off his crown and down his cheeks. Before beginning he removed a handkerchief from his coat, daubed it across his brow. And because his eyes stung so from the thick smoke the handkerchief was kept near the microphone. Tonight he wore only black. Without looking up from his notes he intoned in a clear and somber voice

*"My friends, it is one thing to expect the rights of governance to act according to its conscience, to believe in itself the role of commerce and enterprise, to exact a pledge of obedience upon the mutual needs of all, but another to expect it to witness the growth of a single soul against the lifeblood of a city, or of its mansion on the hill. Better there is a silence, or a sweet and docile murmur. . . ."*

Like the other day, as I walked alone down a crowded street, a stranger brushed up against me, and in the pit of his eyes I saw my death, hanging from the gallows. Thousands were cheering, banners waving through the air. My crime was unquestionable, the trial quick, the debt paid. . . . Or take, if you will, the other night, when, as I neared my house, an old wound was opening up, pouring forth, staining the ground, and like a dog I saw myself crawling under a neighbor's porch, waiting for the end. The neighbor, an old retired switchman, came from his house, and with a flashlight followed the trail from the street, found me cowering in the dirt. He shined the light into my eyes. He

asked what had happened, and I took my hands from my side, revealing the wound. I couldn't see his face, yet I heard him groan. 'You again. Why do you come here? Why do you frighten my children? Are you mad?' He said there was nothing to be done, and begged me to leave, or it wouldn't be long before the real trouble began. But it only began to rain. From time to time there is evidence of a kind that will stir the heart: the old man cursed and went away, and I was able to fall asleep:

*...and once, during a drought, an orchard caught fire, row after row of parched trees flaming like candles on a cake. Entire families came out and wandered through the glowing fields, between the redhot spires, gathering apples, and with sooty hands and faces and stuffed grocery bags returned to their cars and left. No one could stop them. The next day the sheriff arrested the owner of the orchard, my father, when it came to light that the taxes on the land had not been paid in many months. An empty can of gasoline was found in the toolshed and tagged by the sheriffs' deputy. My mother demanded the money for the stolen apples. (As you know, she lives with me now. I am sorry to say her breathing is still irregular, that sometimes I am forced to stick a tube down her throat to keep her going. . . .)*

*...or once, on the eve of the summer solstice, we heard rumors of a forty foot wave crashing into the strand, sweeping dozens of homes out to sea. But all I knew was that when I reported my wife as missing the next day, our dusty street had already been erased from the town's map, and a cartographer was hard at work at a drafting table. . . . outside, on the steps of the courthouse, a small boy was eating fishcakes. He was miles inland at the time, saw nothing. The sky was blue, he said, but he and his friends heard thunder. The sheriff pulled me aside. The boy's aunt would be by shortly. (. . . and for many months*

thereafter I'd ride out to the aunt's farm, checking on the boy's progress. But I stopped when I was told he didn't remember who I was. (You see, within the last year I've gained more than sixty pounds, and the boy, well, he has grown almost a foot. . . .)

....and then, on the way to this meeting, I passed the scene of a crime: a woman had missed the cutoff to a tunnel's entrance, driving head on into a brick wall. The medics had already wrapped her in white and sped her away, but the spiders, her spiders, were still there, spilling out of the wreckage and over the ground. I saw one crawling up the legs of a reporter. I went over to her. A single night, I said. She died of a single night. Did you know her? she asked. No. But I knew of her case. Of the spiders' plague. It was a long time ago, in all the papers. One has to check. . . .

....so afterwards, I went to visit my brother, who stands in the park overlooking a dry fountain, hands in his pockets. He is always the same. But unlike the boy, he remembers me, I think, though he does nothing, really, but stare at lovers strolling by at night, or christen the advent of each sexless dawn, or indulge me as I step high to reach his marble cheek. . . . praying that when I kiss him I will not cling to his foolish face. At his feet there is a plaque which reads: It is forbidden to use anything but one's hand to remove the guano from his shoulders. . . .

....and so you can see, my friends, why it is we must — upon entering these doors and assembling in this room, as we must within this golden city when denied it's bloated coffers — cringe! from the great temptation creeping among us: that though it is one thing to dictate our reasons to live in a world of necessity, to deliver without wage a love of humanity, to force duty from the stiffened muscles of labor, it is quite another to shower the defenseless man or woman with praise."

At first, the audience did not realize he had come to the end of his speech, even as he took his notes and stuck them in his pocket. Even then they remained silent as he stepped away from the podium and took his chair. Several of his colleagues moved over to shake his hand. Finally, one by one, the audience began to rise, bringing their hands together, and began to surge up the center aisle in a single mass to the foot of the stage. Many were in tears, and had forgotten, for a short while, who they were.

- June 1994

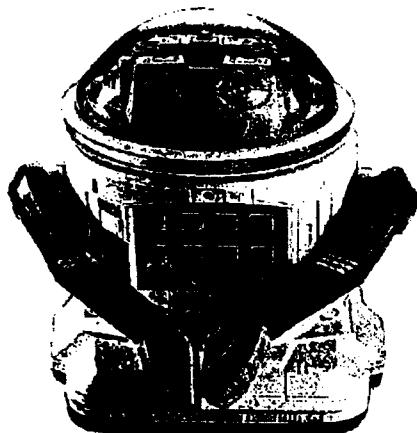
# THE EIGHT TRACK MIND #IV

Ramblings on RPGs, SF, and Misc.

Virgil S. Greene

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Number four! Time flies. Hopefully this will live up to my previous hype as the Media Issue. But first off, let's get to the Official Topic.



## TECHNOLOGY!

"Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic" -Arthur C. Clarke

"Any sufficiently advanced magic is indistinguishable from technology" -Arlan Andrews

What is technology? Well, pretty much everything we make as humans qualifies; even a lot of art. This is one of the things that distinguishes us from the other animals. We make things. This is natural for a human. We have no state of nature as Homo Sapiens that excludes technology. Therefore even the most primitive campaign setting involves technology, even if it is only

chipping flint for spearheads.

But what about Magic? Doesn't magic replace technology in fantasy settings? Well, no. Not really. Most people go about their business in a perfectly mundane fashion with a few differences depending on just how common magic is. Just because something can be done by magic doesn't mean you must use magic to do it.

However, I would argue that magic can be a technology. Really. I know that some people want to have a sense of danger and wonder about magic, with magic rare and poorly understood and dangerous to use. That's fine in a world where magic is incredibly rare or perhaps a new thing, where the only mages are a few experimenters. But if magic is something that has been known for centuries there will be spells that have been refined over generations. If mages have a wealth of information to draw upon they will have some idea what results a given set of magical incantations will produce. There will be spells that will work 99.9% of the time if you don't make an error with no real chance of disastrous consequences; just as reliable as a light switch.

Does that mean that magic should be as simple as using an electrical appliance? Well, for a lot of enchanted items, yes. For casting spells, no. Spells are complicated affairs that are more like mathematical

formulas than anything else and not something that can be used without some degree of training. But once you have that training and have learned that spell it will work as planned if cast correctly. "Create Water" will not suddenly produce slime demons.

This is not to say that there aren't dangers, just as there's dangers in some technology. If you're summoning demons or other extra-planer entities, or you're experimenting with new spells or formulas or material components there will be dangers. There may be differences in how a spell works in different surroundings also; but a knowledgeable mage will be aware of them. In most cases, a tried and true spell or enchanted item will work as reliably as a technological device unless something very unusual happens. A spell "fumble" then is because of an unusual circumstance rather than simply a massive error on the part of a spell caster; you tried to cast "Create Water" on the holy ground of Slub-Nogfutth, the god of slime demons.

In a world where magic is a working, active part of life it will evolve to such a point that it is a technology. There will be theories, and laws, and formulas. It will not be something that puts your life in danger just by casting a minor spell; why would it develop at all if it was incredibly dangerous, unreliable, and gave trivial results?

I should note that when I'm talking about "magic" here I'm talking about spellcasting as is generally done in fantasy RPGs and stories, not magic as used by real-world Wiccans and such. different thing.

## THE SFTV UNIVERSE AFTER STNG

Star Trek: The Next Generation is now history. We've seen that last episode, and it really wasn't bad. Overall, it was a fitting send off to a series that perhaps didn't do everything that we'd have liked it to do, but was often pretty good and sometimes even excellent. Now it is off to the movies with the STNG crew leaving DS9 and the future Star Trek: Voyager show to keep Trek alive on television.

But where should SFTV go from here? It tends to have flaws; Gil Pili noted (Interregnum #3, Strange Sands #1) that Trek tended towards soap opera plots. I think that those were an attempt at human interest or insight stories; the STNG folk did say that they did people stories, not science fiction stories as such. Obviously a series that was sort of an extreme Analog type storyline with stories that were all about nifty neato new techno-goodies and science theories would be boring to the general public. But decent SF doesn't necessarily have to exclude insights into the human condition and character development.

Most SFTV is space opera; it goes beyond what can be reasonably determined to be possible from current knowledge and often beyond accepted SF conventions. Trek pretty much just shoveled the Balonyium and went with what sounded good rather than what made sense. I can think of one show that wasn't Space Opera, that used known science; Star Cops. This BBC show was set in the near future and involved

a UN space police force. No Balonyium here. Alien Nation came close; other than the initial arrival of the alien spacecraft everything was reasonable extrapolations.

Now what would the Idea SF show be? Hmm. I'd like to see a show that doesn't use time travel (despite my fondness for Dr Who), doesn't have god-like aliens (no Q, no Organians), features some regular people as opposed to just a small group of people on a spaceship or station (what are Earth people like in the Trek universe if they aren't in StarFleet?), has non-humanoid aliens if it has aliens, doesn't make up balonyium science for no other reason than plot points (kabloomy rays are interfering with the instruments, captain!), has reasonable weapons if weapons come up (most ray guns are nonsense), and has other reasonable tech. How about a series in a future with asteroid mining, O'Neil space colonies, and a long term project to terraform Mars? A series based on the Future Boston stories could be interesting, though it may have a little balonyum; Boston is the Earth's spaceport for aliens traveling through an artificially moved wormhole.

#### HIGHLANDER: IMMORTALS IN RPG

Q. How many Immortals does it take to change a light bulb? A. There can be only one.

A lot of folk like the television version of Highlander, more I'd guess than the movie. And some people have RPG campaigns featuring Immortals. Rather than try to give stats for Immortals in every RPG

system I'm familiar with, I'm going to try to examine the "why" of the Immortals and how that can fit into a campaign. What is really going on with these strange people?

#### 1. It is destiny set by God or the Universe.

This seems to be the "official" story. God or the Universe is selecting a future ruler of the Earth by having Immortals live, learn, gain something from killing other Immortals, and ultimately leaving one who will have all their power and knowledge. The divine origin would seem to be supported by the fact that even the most evil of Immortals will not violate Holy Ground. The problem with this is the illogic of the Ultimate Ruler being determined by sword skill. Even if this is not the "truth", it does seem to be what the Immortals themselves believe.

I've seen little evidence that an Immortal gains much of anything other than a real rush from killing another Immortal. The only example of a real change in an Immortal after a Quickenning was Darius who went from being a warrior to being a pacifist priest. Perhaps there isn't much of a change unless the first Immortal is incredibly powerful, and the use of the knowledge isn't gained until one gets the Prize. Following this idea Immortals don't get a lot out of killing other Immortals so PC Immortals would acquire little more than a reputation and perhaps enemies. Of course other party members would notice the fireworks when he or she killed another Immortal and would probably have a lot of questions.

## 2. It is all a scam. There is no “Prize”.

Think about it. How does an Immortal know about the Gathering or the Prize? Somebody tells them. It is not inner knowledge. There's no way to prove otherwise until there is only one Immortal left. But WHO knew about it first, and how did they know? Sure, one could argue that the Quickenings is evidence but it could just be a side effect of killing an Immortal with no real lasting effects, usually.

What if it is a story the Watchers or some unknown group made up to keep down the number of Immortals? Some Immortal was told of the Prize by a supposed sage or wise man or priest and told others. Immortals seeking a meaning to their extended, childless lives believed, and newer Immortals assumed that the elders knew what they were talking about.

Of course this begs the question; what are the Immortals then? They're just a random mutation. Humanity is evolving towards immortality, but so far all immortals have been infertile and the genes haven't joined the general pool. Also possible is that the Watchers or another group produced the Immortals through breeding or some incredible form of genetic engineering. Could be aliens or the Illuminati or whatever your favorite secret group is. Obviously the PCs shouldn't know this, at first.



## 3. The Immortals are extraterrestrials.

As I understand it, that is the premise of Highlander II, the Sickening. Never saw it. But under this assumption the Immortals are aliens dropped off on Earth for some reason or another. There probably isn't a Prize, but there could be. They could be like *The Midwich Cuckoos* (movie version, “Village of the Damned) in which children born to Earth women are actually aliens whose genetics are sent from a distant world. The aliens may want to help humanity develop, or they may just want their seed on many worlds. Possibly the real purpose is lost.

## 4. The Immortals are pieces of a god or alien.

Arthur C. Clarke wrote a story in which an alien spaceship crashed on the Earth and the aliens placed their consciousness in an earth creature. Unfortunately, the consciousness got diffused into several individuals and the only thing remaining is a desire to go to the site of the crash which is under the North Sea. The descendants of that original creature are of course lemmings.

This provides an explanation for just why there is a need to kill Immortals and why this energy flows into the victor. They are trying to become “whole”, although they may not know this. While this premise could

work in an SF campaign, I think it works best in a fantasy setting. It lends itself pretty well to the RuneQuest Glorantha setting, as chopped up gods are already part of the mythos. In Glorantha, the victor would have the vanquished's POW added to his or her own. Gradually, they would regain their god powers and when they were Complete, they'd be restored to their place in the universe. I would say that the Immortal should be an NPC as the Immortal is going to become very powerful. Unless the other players don't mind their PCs becoming the servants of another very powerful PC and know about this when the campaign starts I'd not have a PC Immortal.

This could be rather interesting as the PCs help rebuild the god. What if their patron who claims to be a part of Genert, the benevolent earth god is actually a part of Gbaji/Nysalor the dreaded Illuminator or worse, a part of Wakboth the devil?

I will note that I've not tried any of the above campaign ideas but if anybody does send me a note or something. :)

### Looking Backward

Well, shucks, the folk at Cryptch raised their prices so it now costs \$14.95 for 6 issues to an American address, \$22.95 (Canadian) to a Canadian address and \$40 (US) for overseas air. The magazine got bigger, so it is now more expensive.

They are still at:

ILM International 30617 US Hwy 19 N.  
Suite 700 Palm Harbor, FL 34684

Last Update. :)

I've finally actually *read Dune, Dune Messiah, and Children of Dune*. Interesting, and you could get an RPG out of them, but frankly I liked Suchartikal's Inquestral Saga much more interesting.

MTG Legends comments will wait awhile, suffice it to say that it's better than the Antiquities stuff but because of that it vanished really quickly.

## COMMENTS ON #3

This may be a bit on the brief side, as I'm doing all this at about the last possible minute. :(

### \* Editorial Page, Peter Maranci

I support the account stats on the mailing label. I've seen that in subscriptions in the past.

### \* The Log That Flies #3, Peter Maranci

Interactive Literature/Live Action Role Playing may be hitting the big time now with White Wolf's Vampire, The Masquerade and the newly released Nexus by Chaosium (written by Walt Freitag, one of the nicest people you'd ever hope to meet, and Rick Dutton, one of the most competitive and aggressive guys you'd ever meet). However, I really think I'd rather do a "table top" RPG session.

### \* Guest Thing, Rick Staats

Very interesting, though I'm totally unfamiliar with *It Came From the Late, Late Show* except that a character from it named Demonna is used in a movie review

column in Cryptch .

\* Who Is John Galt? #3, Curtis Taylor

I like the idea of PCs working for a troll caravan. Also the bit about accompanying the Chalana Arroy Healer has interesting potentials if one subscribes to the “radical pacifist” model for CAs. :)

\* Aye, Matey #3, Scott Ferrier

The creature in your illustration on the first page is actually a (slightly mutated) wolpertinger. They’re from German legend and according to the GURPS Fantasy Beastiary they are much fiercer than the jackalope, being omnivorous and sometimes attacking humans. Really.

We’re working on that post-holocaust campaign....

\* Refugee # (algebra), George Phillies

Interesting stuff on the Canadian game censorship law. I think most companies are responsibly labeling their games if they have “adult” content so such a law is questionable.

I forgot to note last time that I rather liked “Who Slays Satan?”.

\* The Skeleton Key #9, David Hoberman

The PCs and the law bit, or whether PCs are going to at best be vigilantes, deserves a full article and we’ll try for one in the future. One thing that crosses my mind right now is that if the PCs are far from the most powerful folk around they may well follow laws more faithfully. In AD&D it does seem that the PCs become so powerful that regular law enforcement just can’t handle them.

\* Session Notes #17, Doug Jorenby

Is playing teen-agers harder than playing aliens or demi-humans? Actually, how well can somebody play something radically different from themselves? Another full article topic.

\* Distant Deeps And Skys #1, Lois Folstein

Roleplaying and improvisational acting are really the same thing, aren’t they? But I have found that it is really draining to be continually “in character” like at an IFGS (LARP) event.

On Doppleganger: Well...it seemed incomplete to me. It may be that I’m missing something though.

When does a game become a Mind Game? When instead of Role Playing you’re busy trying to figure out what the GM wants. As I’ve said, that’s why I’m generally against sheetless/diceless/total GM discretion RPGing.

\* Strange Sands #1, Gilbert Pili

It’s hard to bring a dream reality to gaming, to lose oneself in it, and I suspect that it could be in a way dangerous. It’d be cool, though. :)

That’s it for this go-round. Next month, who knows? Note that use of copyrighted and trademarked names is not a challenge to such statis and all such belong to their proper holders, as well they should.

## Strange Sands

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### Everettville

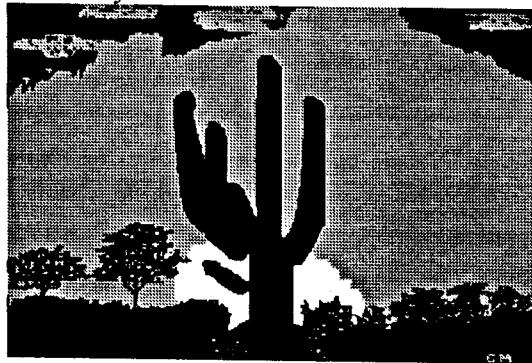
Well, I managed to survive another move this year. Seems like every time I finally get settled, the roommate moves out, and I'm stuck either trying to find a new person for the place I'm in, or pack up all my junk and resettle. I was hoping I could last longer this time around, but, alas, my roommate went out and got married (the poor sod!). Fortunately, I knew somebody who lives in the next town over, and, all things considered, things went smoothly. The new place is nice, and except for a rather nosy landlady and a somewhat tough neighborhood, things seem to be working out well.

### Guardian Spirit

"Guardian Spirit" is a RuneQuest adventure that my friend, Dan Johnson and I have been working on for some time. It is, for all purposes, a rough draft and has nothing in the way of statistics, and yet we did write a complete adventure. I'll be the first to admit I'm not a Gloranthan expert, but we did try to work in as many elements of the world as we felt comfortable with. If you can use it,

we'd be more than happy to hear about your experiences. If you think it's so much doo doo, well, we'd be glad to hear that, too. At this point we're just happy to have people look at the damn thing. Suggestions or hurled tomatoes are welcome. We do plan on submitting it to Avalon Hill at some point, so I will stipulate that *Guardian Spirit* is a copyrighted product and may not be reproduced for publication.

### Technology, or New and Improved Ways of Screwing Things Up



Time to ramble. For the first time in my life, I have a really nice computer (a 486DX33), and I can't decide whether it's made me more productive than when I was using an inherited 8088 clunker. The old PC had WordPerfect 5.1

and a simple communications program. The new one has OS/2, Windows up the wazoo and a few computer games (Doom, Castle Wolfenstein and Ultima VII). The one thing I will say for Windows is that is really is pretty to look at. All those nifty little icons, screen savers and endlessly configurable color patterns. Unfortunately, what I've found is that I spend all my time fiddling

with the cool little icons and not enough time actually writing. This I write down as lack of discipline on my part; after all, it's not the tool but how you use it, right? But, the other half of me asks, if the beautiful machine were not so beautiful, would I be so entranced by it? If my text were to scroll across the screen in bland ASCII format instead of lovely Times Roman, would I not pay more attention to what I was writing rather than how it looks?

Ah, yes, the curse of Windows. Everything is so neat and organized on the screen that when I notice a file out of place or haphazardly saved in the wrong directory, well of course I'll spend hours optimizing the sequence of files, making certain nothing sags out of alignment or strays from the path. (Sure, Gil—blame the *computer* for making you anal retentive!) And so it goes. The double-edged sword of technology. Sometimes I just want a pen and paper, but the minute I'm away from the computer I miss it.

But technology is changing so quickly that it seems that we have to leap just to hang on. And some people aren't surviving that leap. People are losing jobs because they don't know Windows, for God's sake. Not that it's that difficult to learn; I just wonder that a piece of technology can be so influential that it becomes a sink or swim proposition.

A recent commentary on the information highway spoke of the fragmentation that select information feeds will bring, and invoked the fear that a lack of a well-rounded body of information could ultimately lead to the downfall of modern society. Will the information highway make

newspapers obsolete? When we're plugged into a common TV link, and can select any show at any time, will we miss out on important news we might catch while channel flipping? And even if we do become so specialized in our knowledge, will that divide society into smaller groups—to the point where we venture less frequently into other groups and become a nation of cliques? Major technological shifts have always brought uncertainty—look at cars and telephones. But it seems that the current pace of change is so rapid that it's becoming increasingly difficult to keep up. A computer has a life expectancy of six months, according to the industry's laws of obsolescence.

The thing I find interesting, though, how the increase in computer and communications technology has led to a deluge of grim and dirty roleplaying worlds that reflect that fear of technology run amok. Worlds where the machine has become so integrated with the body that the machine becomes part of us, and us a part of the machine. Data chips set in the brain, neurotransmitters, genetically enhanced electronic limbs—we're asking if this is technology's ultimate role. Star Trek shows us two possibilities: the Borg, who have been completely dehumanized by technology, and the Federation, who use technology as a tool, but to a "just" and "moral" end.

So the question is, should we chart our technological course in advance, or spring headlong into the future, and let it sort itself out? These are the sort of things for which a roleplaying game is perfectly suited. What happens when the social lines begin to fragment? What would be the consequences

of terraforming Mars? What happens when the chip in the brain short circuits? Cyberpunk seems ideally suited for exploring the implications of blindly leaping into a new technology. And yet, in some roleplaying games, it seems to have degenerated into souped-up machine gun fights between leather-clad street punks and corporate lawyer types. This may be a commentary on violence in the streets of America, but it is a waste of the genre's potential and pandering to the lowest common denominator. Violence, in and of itself, is boring.

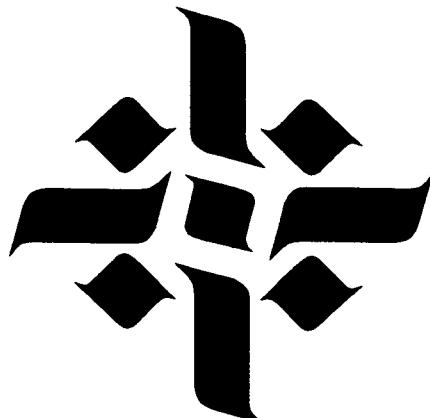
*Total Recall* was fun, but with characters being pumped full of lead every five minutes or so, it lost potential. *The Road Warrior* was better, but the world in chaos is less interesting than the *possibility* of the world falling into chaos. When I talk about the consequences of technology, I mean the beneficial as well as the detrimental. Cyberpunk dwells so long on the bleakness of the situation that it becomes claustrophobic and ultimately an exercise in narcissism. If the best my character can hope for is an apartment in a slightly better section of slum city, then why bother? Of all the grim futures I've seen, *Blade Runner* was the best, simply because it managed to step back every so often and look at the larger picture—there was room to breathe. *The Terminator* is a close second because it manages to take us fast forward into a world where technology has literally and violently taken over, and then brings us back to a point where we can do something to stop it.

In contrast to the possibility of the world falling into ruins, another option is to allow the possibility for the world *to recover* from

chaos. I mentioned *The Morrow Project* last issue, because the tension in that game comes from giving the PCs a chance to rebuild the world, and actually handing them the tools to do it. Scott Ferrier's campaign write-up in Issue #3 uses the same principle to good effect.

My faith in human nature says our obsession with the machine won't go away. It simply carries too many benefits to dismiss, and to say we should go back to using sticks to create fire just won't wash. At the same time, where do we go to for the human needs that the machine can't provide? This is probably going to be one of the major questions we'll need to answer for ourselves as we approach the 21st century. Religious values have undergone tremendous change in just the last 10 years, and it probably won't stop there. What role will technology play? Should religion and technology be separated like church and state? My own hope is that we'll be able to step back and forth from a technological world to a natural one, and not feel uncomfortable in doing so.

Now, if I can just stay away from Solitaire...  
:)



## Interregnum #3

### The Log That Flies

*The Jungle* is an intriguing LARP idea. It would be a challenge to establish the state of mind to play characters living in such an alien setting, but given enough preparation, anything is possible. Leaving the City might be something like emerging from a dream, and encountering reality for the first time could create some strange situations. *The Emerald Forest* comes to mind for some reason...

I, too will miss Star Trek: the Next Generation, though I certainly have flamed my share of episodes. The last episode actually had me feeling wistful over the next couple days.

I'm feeling kind of frustrated about RuneQuest as well. I recently dropped my subscription to the RQ Digest because the discussions were so focused on Gloranthan minutiae. There should be a separate digest for people who actually want to *play* RuneQuest instead of talk about it.

"The Old Thing" is short, but it works nicely. It definitely had the "Lovecraftian" feel, especially his mythic stories.

### The Fastest Tentacle in the West

Hmmm, this might just work! Never thought of Cthulhu in the Old West, but now it seems a natural fit. The characters were bizarre and interesting.

### Who Is John Galt?

Been reading though *Strangers In Prax*—an interesting approach so far, though the Lunar Coders are a bit much. They remind me of the Justice League of America.

Enjoyed the Gloranthan hooks; what if the trolls are interested in the Chalana Arroy healer and decide they want to keep her services? Meanwhile the herbs are needed for an emergency back at her temple?

Just remembered *Atlas Shrugged*! A great book—I need to go back and read it again...

### Aye, Matey

Gotta say I *really* liked your campaign idea. Nothing like putting ignorant PCs out in the real world! I especially liked the coming of age ceremony; how do they decide who they can marry?

Your Magic strategy works very well, having experienced it first hand. :)

### Refugee

I find it amazing that people will blame every deviant behavior on the influence of a game and yet completely ignore the upbringing of the person in question. Parents who blame games for their children's behavior are, as Oprah would say, "in denial."

### The Skeleton Key

I agree with you when it comes to separating adventure and system. I'd almost prefer to read scenarios without any system references at all, and then use the one I happen to be most comfortable with.

The monthly schedule is tougher, but I think it's worth trying. If people can't get a zine in every month, hopefully others will pick up the slack.

### The Eight Track Mind

The idea of travelling through the villain's mind sounds like fun. How about delving into a friend's mind as a sort of rescue? The PCs might have to deal with a set of fears that they didn't know about and would have to use their knowledge of the person to try and overcome them.

Mallworld? (Running for the door screaming) :)

### Session Notes

Interesting that *Cyberpunk 2.0.2.0.* is trying to get away from the violent trend. I tend to agree with you, though. New players will most likely see the word "cyberpunk," and think of the same thing I do: ultraviolence. It would take a very good group of players to get me to change my mind.

### Distant Deeps and Skies

"Doppelganger" was extremely well written. You must have worked hard to do such a nice job of pacing and setting mood. In any case, it read effortlessly. Send it out!

Love your zine title and layout! Kudos.

# Guardian Spirit

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## Gamemaster Background

This adventure takes place in Carmania, a western province of the Lunar Empire. Best known for its brass mining, Carmania maintains the trappings of a feudal society. In reality it has degenerated into a land of idle dilettantes and ruffian knights. Real power is held by the Lunar Governor, Palamtales, who resides in Kitor. A bizarre result of the Lunar occupation is the combination of Lunarian culture with a feudal society. The upper classes maintain their noble titles, but have begun to ape Lunar "sophistication" in matters of literature, art and dress.

This adventure centers on the bizarre circumstances surrounding the Governor's ascendancy to office and his administration of the province. The most disturbing development involves a series of horrible, inexplicable murders. Several villages report the death and mutilation of local citizens. The murders are spread over a wide geographic area with the only link being that each victim is the head of a lower class household.

The Governor's rule has also been marred recently by the rise of the Invisible Orlanth cult. On the surface, the belief reconciles the two religions of Loskalm and the east, worship of the Invisible God and Orlanth. Lately, however, true Orlanthis have begun to make their way through the cult in the hopes of utilizing it to throw off the shackles of the Empire. The Red Goddess has been

tolerant of the upstart cult, but is keeping watch.

The Brass Mountain mines provide a major economic resource. Of the income from the mines, one third goes to the local Count, one third to the Provincial Governor (Palamtales), and one third to the Emperor. Any disturbance in the steady flow of metal exported from these mines is sure to bring about quick and intense scrutiny by Imperial authorities. Carmanian nobles also value the mines for the wealth it brings to the aristocracy; the local population resents the misuse of that wealth. The populace at large has grown tired, however, of seeing their hard-earned wealth slip into the pockets of the already wealthy. Now that even simple things like protection from outlaws is not being provided, the cries for justice are growing louder, and the mines are becoming known as a hotbed of rebel activity.

Of all these situations, the most pressing is the chain of unsolved murders. Many theories have arisen regarding the identity of the murderer. These range from rebels hoping to inspire civil unrest to sorcerers performing sacrifices. The truth is much stranger. The Governor Palamtales has two souls. His public persona is capable, canny, friendly but formal. He is known for his fair treatment of his subjects and by the Lunar Empire for his reliability. His secret persona is more akin to a hungry beast or demon, whose lust for personal revenge cannot be sated. Palamtales' half that seeks revenge on his father is responsible,

### Introducing the Player Characters

The PCs approach to this adventure will depend on who they are and for whom they work. Listed below are a number of options to consider based on the PCs identity; parties may be composed of members of any number of the groups listed, and may not know their companions' motivation.

#### *Wandering PCs*

A group of adventurers may simply stumble upon a village struck with murder, or possibly another group that is attempting to solve the murders. They could get caught up in the political rivalries in the process. Possible hooks include friends or relatives in the area who become victims or even suspects. In the latter case, PCs may be interested in clearing their friend's name.

Most importantly, PCs should have a stake in the outcome of the mystery. GMs should emphasize how the situation affects the PCs personally. Take PC motivation into account when introducing the scenario.

#### *Lunar Agents*

Fairly high ranking members of the local garrison could be commissioned by Palamtales to track down the murderer(s) and bring them to justice. Likely suspects are the Invisible Orlanth cultists, degenerate Carmanians, agents paid by outside interests, enemies of Palamtales, or just a crazed local.

Travelling initiates of the Seven Mothers cult. Unknown to most people, these individuals act as an

intelligence/enforcement agency who report directly to the Red Emperor. PCs may be commissioned from the Heartland to investigate rumors of unrest in the province and eliminate the cause. Another lead in could step from a mystic vision by a priest or even a party member. For example, the priest sees that disharmony has taken root in the province and must be reunited. Seven Mothers cultists will probably suspect just about everyone.

#### *Carmanian Moderates*

Moderates would want to solve the murders to restore civic order. This would avoid a crackdown by the Lunar overlords and allow them to slowly build their power base by recruiting new members. Moderates would suspect anyone from radicals intent on creating disorder to demented Lunars indulging in chaos.

#### *Carmanian Radicals*

Other locals may be just as interested in implicating the Lunars as much as in solving the murders. Though they may wish to know the truth for themselves, they may wish to withhold it from the people at large. Any number of anti-Lunar cults can be considered candidates for this group.

#### *Neutral Locals*

Simple lower-class Carmanians may just want to protect their communities. Sorcerers worry about persecution, and may want to solve the murders in order to protect themselves. Noble Carmanians want to eliminate instability and protect their wealth and position.

although he himself does not realize what he has done. Indeed, Palamtales wants to get to the bottom of the mystery and put a stop to this blemish on his rule.

PCs will need to sort out the various factions and decide who is actually causing the murders. The mystery is complicated by the fact that several groups and NPCs could be involved—all have motives that could point

to them as suspects.

### Important Personalities

#### *Palamtales*

The imperial governor of Carmania suffers from a dual identity. On the surface, he is a competent, unemotional man. But an

incident in his childhood has created an malignant entity which seethes just below the surface. Palamtales' escaped an abusive father and was adopted by a seemingly kind Lunar official. He learned a great deal about Lunar politics under the tutelage of the official, but as he reached his teen years, the official began to make sexual advances on Palamtales. Betrayed and angry, Palamtales slew the official in his sleep. Unknown to Palamtales, however, the official was possessed by a chaotic spirit named Malatese, who, upon the officials death, left the body and attacked Palamtales. Unable to fend off the spirit, Palamtales became possessed. The spirit preys upon the weaknesses of its host and has perverted Palamtales' desire for revenge upon anyone who represents a father figure. Malatese manifests itself by leaving Palamtales' body and possessing small children and murdering them in much the same way Palamtales murdered the official.

### *Derontis*

Palamtales' scribe has served the governor faithfully for over fifteen years. Unknown to Palamtales, Derontis has fallen in love with his employer over the years. He also discovered Palamtales' dual nature during a military field campaign. He witnessed the spirit of Malatese leaving the governor's body. Curious and worried, Derontis used over the next days Analyze Magic, Reconstruction and Mind Read spells to discover the nature of the spirit. He knows that to separate the spirit from Palamtales would kill his master. His love for Palamtales has driven him to protect the secret of the "Guardian Spirit." Should he become aware that anyone is close to

### **Logical Order for Malatese's Murders**

Malatese will generally seek out the father of a child of the proper age (5-10) before he will target other victims. If he cannot find such a victim, Malatese will target those who have presented themselves as an obstacle to Palamtales, or even someone with whom Palamtales has had unpleasant contact. Only after these choices have been exhausted will Malatese attack a random target. Finally, the victim must be within Palamtales general vicinity (up to 15 km distance).

discovering the secret, he will take any means necessary to either divert the interlopers or, if necessary, dispose of them.

When Derontis learns the PCs have begun to suspect Palamtales as the murderer, he writes up an order for their release on the condition that they dispose of the PCs. He makes sure they follow his order by forcing Krashkid eggs down their throats and informing them that only he can extract them before they hatch inside their stomach and kill them. In truth, Derontis has neither the intention nor the ability to remove the eggs.

### *Bully Boy, Ex-Miner and Criminal*

Wanted for various crimes of violence, Bully Boy and his gang were recently hauled in by a Lunar patrol. He is a huge, ugly, ex-miner with a patchy, unkempt beard and long greasy hair. His left hand is missing the two bottom fingers. He generally speaks in a grunts, but he is cunning and vicious. His motley band of misfits do not think twice about killing anyone in their path.

### *Grisson Norlav, Moderate Orlanthi Leader*

A blacksmith by trade, Grisson cuts an imposing figure among his fellow natives. A vibrant sixty, only his fully white hair and beard serve to belie his breadth of chest and thickness of arm. Lacking sons to inherit his business, Grisson spreads his paternal instincts among the children of his fully grown daughters and his people as a whole.

Though not happy with the Lunar occupation, he is realistic enough to acknowledge that Carmania has no hope of gaining total freedom by force of arms. He joined the resistance in order to help provide a "voice of reason" to temper the high-flown plans of various hot heads. Grisson's wisdom and dedication to the course have resulted in Grisson achieving a spot on the Inner Council, where his moderate influence has prevented much senseless bloodshed. Unfortunately, with the public indignation following the recent murders, Grisson's calls for limited objectives are paid less attention.

Grisson is neither a traitor nor an opportunist. His caution is fueled by his concern for the future of his own grandchildren and his people in general. He worries about what kind of world he may be leaving them. He sees his task as shepherding the interests of the common people between the greed of the Lunars on one hand and the blood lust of the Orlanthison the other.

### *Quintalos Rhyoleth, Radical Orlanthi Leader*

Though idealized by many lower class Orlanthis for championing their cause,

Quintalos is much less than the selfless idealist he appears. The spoiled only child of a wealthy Carmanian noble, Quintalos is rebelling more against the upper-class aping of Lunar culture than the plight of the common people. In his egotism, he sees himself as the savior of the average Carmanian, who he believes doesn't realize the extent of his unhappiness.

### **Possible Suspects**

#### *Rivals of Palamtales*

Every successful man has enemies. These people will not pass up an opportunity to embarrass, disgrace or discredit the Governor. A certain amount of damage to the Empire is considered acceptable, as long as their personal plans and ambitions are advanced.

#### *Carmanian Radicals*

Radical members of the local resistance might be interested in playing up the murders in order to embarrass the Lunars. They might not really care who the perpetrator really is, as long as the Empire is implicated among the commoners. Any real effort to solve the mystery would come as a result of information that would further their cause. The Invisible Orlanth cult, led by Quintalos Rhyoleth, is a major element in such maneuvers.

#### *Commander of the Garrison*

Could advance his position by enacting martial law. He would be noticed and Palamtales would look incompetent.

#### *Local Rumors*

An escaped criminal or madman is popular among the upper class. A check with the local garrison could turn up some information. Almost everyone has mentioned a secret chaos cult or monster, and more imaginative folks even suspect a Lunar experiment gone awry. Sorcerers, of course, are always suspect.

By espousing a cause, Quintalos has gained center stage, and he loves the limelight. Strutting about in "traditional" Carmanian garb, he is perceived by the older nobles as an overgrown adolescent going through a phase, and by the Lunars as a fool. They are both right, but that does make him any less dangerous. Quintalos has gathered about him a clique of hangers on from his own social/age group. These young dilettantes have enough time and money to provide a valuable, if misused resource to the resistance.

His adoption of traditional garb and speeches about the "old ways and values" have gained him a sympathetic audience among the lower classes. They contrast his behavior with the accommodation most of the nobility have made for the Lunars. After seeing so many of them take to foreign ways, dress and manners, Quintalos seems like a godsend. Of course, Quintalos loves the adoration, and the accolades have led him to push for more radical action, culminating in the revolt at the mines. More an actor than a strategist, he may not realize the damage his actions have borne until he experiences the reality of cold campfires, or sees a friend lying impaled on a Lunar spear.

## Events

### An Interview with Palamtales

Regardless of the PC's origin, Palamtales at one point will appoint someone to investigate the murders. If the PCs are sympathetic to the Lunar occupation, they may receive an opportunity to meet with the

#### Palamtales Demeanor

During the interview, PCs making a Human Lore roll note that Palamtales seems fatigued, or even tormented. He periodically stops after a sentence to rub his temples. If asked, he will explain that the duties of his office and the fact that he has not been sleeping well is wearing upon him. The referee should note that the true cause of the governor's fatigue is his nocturnal forays as Malatese.

governor.

Palamtales is in his 40s, but has not yet succumbed to the paunch that plagues many Lunar officials. Clear-eyed and dignified, Palamtales leaves no doubt that he is in command. A hush falls in the rooms he enters. He generally wears a flowing red cape, traced with gold embroidered symbols of the Red Goddess.

The governor's residence at Kitor is a three story manor house of adobe, surrounded by a ten foot high stone wall and graced with flowering gardens and cool terraces. Palamtales conducts his official business in the atrium, and characters gaining an audience will be escorted there. The atrium is a large, opened roofed chamber. An ornate fountain and indoor garden stand as a backdrop for Palamtales' Seat of Office.

Four guards are stationed at all times while audiences are in session, and a scribe is present in a chair to the right. He takes copious notes during the meeting. Palamtales will question PCs about their past, goals and qualifications before speaking at length regarding the troubles plaguing his territory.

"Well, gentlemen, unless you have been walking alone in the desert for the past few weeks, you must already know something of what has transpired throughout my province. More to the point, these murders are undermining confidence in my ability to rule. I've considered assigning the captain of the guard to investigate, but I feel that an official investigation may not gain as much information as a more subtle approach. There is also the issue of local dissidents, who may take the opportunity to instigate more unrest than is already occurring."

"I offer a reward of 1,000 Lunars if you can provide me with proof of the murderers identity and bring the evidence to me. I will judge the matter as I see fit. Your reward will be denied if you take justice into your own hands. The Lunar empire has no place for vigilantes or cutthroats. We are here to provide order and peace. I will brook no disregard for the laws in this province."

Palamtales will answer some questions at this point, and may give PCs information regarding the last murder sites, but after a time, he grows weary and announces the end of the audience.

### An Ambush

Almost immediately after PCs have left the audience chamber and are in a secluded spot, they are ambushed by a group of Invisible Orlanth cultists. Upon rounding a corner, the party is attacked with magic in an attempt to capture (as opposed to kill). Should the group fend off the attack, the cultists will flee to their underground hideout within the city. PCs may be able to track them, if they are in decent condition.

### Identifying the Ambushers

Observant characters will notice that the room is too well ventilated to be a basement. A successful Scan roll reveals this and that the walls are rounded. Another Scan roll lets PCs realize that in the dim light, the ambushers clothes are covered with rock dust. A Human Lore roll connects the question regarding the strike with the mines at Brass Mountain. By the tone of their voices and by the nature of the questioning, possible identities of the kidnappers are Invisible Orlanthis, disgruntled Carmanians, or perhaps rivals to the current Lunar rule.

If the PCs are captured, the cultists blindfold and tie characters, then hide them in the back of a wagon. The Orlanthis then spirit the captured PCs away to their hideout. The characters find themselves in an abandoned stone tower, used as a rendezvous point for the band. The stones are moist with condensation, and most of the upper levels have fallen into rubble. Three Orlanthis, who wear cloth hoods with eye and mouth slits, proceed to grill the PCs:

"You were in audience with the governor. Why? Who is the governor protecting? Who is he pinning the murders on? How many guards did you see in the house? Who do you work for? What assignment did the governor give? What do you hope to gain by these murders? What does *he* gain? Does he know about the strike? Are the local nobility involved?"

After questioning the PCs for a while, the Orlanthis will inform the group that they will be let go, but that they must bring the murderer to them when caught or "blood will run in the streets." The PCs are left alone until later, when food and drink is

20 poison that will render any PC failing their resistance roll unconscious. PCs who resist the poison can feign unconsciousness. They also gain the opportunity to trace the route back to the tower with a successful Scan roll as they are dumped off in the foothills of the Brass Mountains.

### **Hunting for Clues**

#### *The Temple of Irippi Ontor*

PCs can gain access to the temple by making a donation of 50L and giving evidence that the governor has approved the visit.. The temple librarian will lead the characters in through a room filled with drafting style tables, where scribes stand scrawling notes onto large scrolls. PCs will have a difficult time finding scrolls on their own, as the filing system is extremely convoluted and archaic. The scribe will bring back numerous treatises based on what the PCs ask for. After the PCs, leave the librarian goes to Derontis to tell him about what was found. Derontis may have the PCs tailed.

## The Mines

1. *A Physical Geography of Carmania* by Theophilus. Generally describes natural resources, land use, etc. Of note is the metal resources in the Brass Mountains.
2. Alchemist treatise on various ores and how to refine. Not especially useful.
3. "Mountains as the Home of the Wind Gods" Religious treatise claiming Orlanth lives in the mountains, based primarily on the premise of the howling winds that emanate from the caves of the Brass Mountains. Not especially convincing.
4. "Things that Live Under the Earth" Description of creatures found in the region. Of note are the sightings of Krarshtkids in the mines of the Brass Mountains.

## Murders

1. Court records of Kitor judge. Of note are several cases with descriptions of horrific murders in recent years. An (INTx5) roll lets characters notice that many of these murders are unprovoked attacks on male heads of households, resulting in many widows and orphans. Especially interesting is the fact that an investigation initiated by Palamtales himself turned up nothing.

If PCs follow up on this lead, they can speak to members of the Lunar guards who partook in the investigation. Evidently, the hoplite who lead the investigation died in a grisly "accident." Actually, the Bully Boy arranged the horrible demise while he was investigating one of the local foundries. Details of the killing are left to the GM, but the remains of the hoplite were fished out of a cauldron/vat of molten metal.

2. History of assassinations and feuds among noble families prior to Lunarian conquest. Appropriated by Lunarians after occupation. Not particularly relevant, but many spine-tingling descriptions of ambushes, murders, poisonings and tortures.
3. *Possession in Judicial Cases of Crime* - An obscure tome that lists cases where spiritual or demonic possession was thought to be involved. In passing, a note mentions numerous cases of child possession in the recent years that seemed to spread with Glowlane and the Lunar Empire.
4. *Sacrificial Practices of Black Magicians* - A tome describing a band of Brithini sorcerers infamous for a series of

Tappings in Carmania. The story describes, in lurid detail, their practice of wanton killing, until they were finally subdued by the Hrestoli, at great cost. (Resurgence of cult?)

## Local Religious Factions

1. *Human Geography of Carmania* by Theopheles - A census report telling of local religious practices and detailed beliefs of Carmanians. Evidently used during the occupation to bring locals into the fold of the Seven Mothers.
2. *Followers of the Wind Gods* - A treatise describing the insane practices of the Orlanth worshippers, and their stubborn refusal to bow to the goddess. Shows some ignorance in understanding the true nature of Orlanth (?)
3. *The Superiority of the Red Goddess* - Unsurprisingly arrogant pseudo-intellectual pap listing point by point, how superior the goddess is..
4. *Orlanth: A Father to His Children*. Similar to Bible stories read to children. Full of parables. A INTx5 roll may make a connection with the numerous household killings. A Lore roll would reveal that patricide is the worst sin possible for Carmanians. PCs may be able to deduce that children would be the last suspects in Carmania.

## Palamtales

*Codicil of Carmanian Quality* - Biographical articles regarding Carmanian governors, nobility and clergy. Written by various authors over several decades, it is a imposing tome which discusses the history of numerous prominent personalities. Oddly, except for the final paragraphs discussing Palamtales' recent edicts, the entire section describing his background has been roughly torn out. When Derontis discovered Palamtales' secret, he removed the pages to protect him. If the PCs ask about the author of the article, have them make a Human Lore roll. Those who succeed notice that the scribe seems visibly upset and uncomfortable. A successful Orate roll (with bonuses for good roleplaying) convinces the scribe to tell his story. "I'm sorry, Malcolm was a good friend. He died five years ago after completing many of the more recent events in this book, and was one of the senior scribes here." Another successful Orate roll will be needed to get him to say exactly how his friend died. "Somehow, the eggs of some chaos creature got into his food... They hatched and the things...ate their way out... They say they were Krarshtkids. Some of the scribes whisper the eggs were not in the food by accident. This missing page is most disturbing..."

## A Murder Scene

As the PCs enter a local village, they realize that the town is in an uproar. There seems to be a crowd gathered outside one of the local barns, and there are shouts of outrage. As they get closer, they can hear people speaking angrily about insane sorcerers and Lunarian chaos experiments. "Poor Orgrath! Why don't the Lunarians do something besides simply collect taxes? Is Palamtales enjoying himself? The Red Goddess only brings us evil. I heard the same thing happened a few weeks ago in Limer!" Depending on who the PCs are, they may have to defend themselves against angry villagers.

Should PCs push through the crowd and enter, they find an middle-aged man impaled to the inside wall with various farm implements—pitchforks, scythes, nails, spikes, shovels. His eyes are rolled back in his head and blood has dripped into a grisly puddle at his feet. His upper torso is impaled and his legs sprawl out over the floor.

Evidently, Orgrath was a local farmer and father. His family can be found in the barnyard, being comforted by neighbors and relatives. Orgrath is succeeded by his wife, Yolani and six children: Kulai, Manazu, Kendros, Nani, Janla, and Zima. A Human Lore roll allows PCs to notice that Kulai, the youngest at 6, is not crying.

The characters will probably try to question the villagers. Lunars will have a tougher time of it, and may need to do some decent roleplaying and succeed in making Orate rolls to get the information. The basic story

### A Look at the Body

A successful First Aid roll reveals that the victim was impaled while alive and lingered on for several hours afterwards. A second First Aid roll will show that none of the vital organs were pierced by weapons. This seems to indicate that the victim was intended to die slowly. A World Lore roll will indicate that, due to the position of the body and the angle of the murder weapons, the attacker was short. Another World Lore roll lets the character realize that enormous strength was needed to impale the body in this fashion.

follows: Orgrath went out sometime the previous night without waking his wife. When Yolani woke the next morning, she fed and clothed the children before looking for her absent husband. She noticed that the family cow had strayed outside, and when she brought it back in for milking, she found Orgrath's body. If she's prodded to remember anything else unusual, Yolani recalls that Kulai was playing in the yard naked when she went outside.

Kulai will be intimidated if the entire party circles around him and starts asking questions. He will respond more favorably if one PC takes him aside, kneels down and questions him gently. A Human Lore roll reveals that Kulai is not reacting emotionally at all. If the characters question him, he mentions simply that he had bad dreams. "The bad man was after me. I made him stop." If they ask him about Orgrath, he says "Daddy went away." If asked if he is sad, Kulai simply shrugs and says, "It happened a long time ago."

If the PCs badger or abuse the family, the villagers will quickly drive them off.

### The Riot

At some point, the PCs should return to Kitor. After spending some time in the city, they notice they are being watched by a gray cloaked figure, who scurries away upon being spotted. (If PCs do not indicate they have seen him, he'll continue to watch, and PCs will have a chance to surprise and capture him.) If they follow, the PCs soon find themselves maneuvering between a crowd of people who have gathered in the central plaza. A successful Scan roll allows PCs to recognize Palamtales' scribe just before he melts away into the crowd.

A villager stands atop a makeshift pedestal, regaling the Lunars for their incompetence. "...five murders in so many weeks! And Palamtales sits atop his throne doing nothing! His soldiers saunter about as if in a daze, growing fat. Who will stop these killings? Not our government. It's up to us I tell you. I'll tell you who's murdering us in our beds: the Lunars and their Red Goddess, that's who. Why do you think they are doing nothing? Because it is in their interest to destroy us, take our land. And not only our land. Our culture! See how the nobility prostitute themselves to the Lunar overlords, aping their customs and manners. Denying their own heritage? These are the people we trust to keep us safe? The mines are next on their list, and they seek to demoralize us with these killings!" PCs making a successful Listen roll will recognize the voice as the same as one of the trip that interrogated them earlier (Quintalos Rhyoleth). If the party thinks to track him down during the riot, he'll say, smiling, "Too late, friends. I have done my part." If they interrogate him, he'll reveal, giggling, that

the riot was a distraction. "The important work is being done in the Brass Mountains." PCs may be able to deduce that he is a member of a fanatic branch of the Invisible Orlanthis.

The crowd grows steadily, until finally, when a Lunar patrol arrives, they have grown violent. Townsmen throw rocks at the Lunars, who respond with magical spells. Chaos breaks out, and the crowd steadily moves inward to swarm over the guards. PC witness several Lunars being torn limb from limb. Whether the PCs run to avoid the riot or stay to try calming the townspeople, they suddenly find themselves face-to-face with a wyvern. The scribe has cast a dominate (wyvern) spell on this creature and calls it down from the mountain. The wyvern attacks the PCs as the crowd scatters, terrified. If the PCs are having difficulty defeating the beat, the following entry of the priests of the Red Goddess will come sooner. If the PCs defeat the wyvern, the Red Goddess cultists enter just afterwards.

### The Red Goddess Declares Martial Law

Palamtales, responds to the riots in Kitor by declaring Marshal Law, by decree of the Red Goddess. Troops swarm through the city, and a curfew is imposed at sundown. Various people thought to have instigated the riot are tortured publicly. The PCs will probably be rounded up with other members of the crowd, disarmed, and thrown into a pit for punishment. For the rest of the day, PCs reside at the bottom of the city's dumping post. During the day, some people are hauled up for public flogging. The next

morning a guard patrol is sent to retrieve the characters and bring them back to Palamtales. As they walk through the streets, the guards talk among themselves about the "raid on the mines." They seem concerned that they will be sent to clean out the "disloyal scum." Putting two and two together might reveal that the mines in the Brass Mountains have been "liberated" by a radical group of Invisible Orlanthis. The guards will not speak with PCs.

### Into the Pit

While they are in the punishment hole, PCs are subject to being dumped with refuse, chamber pots and anything else the GM can concoct. Characters may notice at some point that an old man is being bullied by other members of the crowd. If they show any kindness whatsoever, he will be extremely grateful. His name is Ordath, and although he is partially blind and deaf, he is knowledgeable and friendly (see sidebar). At some point, however, members of Bully Boy's gang will be lowered into the pit. They've been sent to dispose of the PCs, and beneath their shabby clothes they carry sharpened weapons. Their arrival won't seem exceptional (people are being thrown down throughout the day), but they soon start to act belligerently, and seemingly at random, pick out the PCs and attack. The fact that Bully Boy's gang could get weapons into the pit should clue the PCs that someone has been bribed. Should they survive the attack, PCs can interrogate Bully Boy's gang, but all they know is that their leader, Bully Boy, told them of the objective and said not to worry about bringing weapons. Derontis has hired Bully Boy to end the PCs investigation and hopes the loss

will go unnoticed in the chaos of martial law and the uprising at the mines. If Bully Boy's gang fails, he'll summon the PCs to the villa to deal with them personally.

### Ordath

Although he appears to be close to 80 years old, Ordath is actually a young man who barely survived a spirit of reprisal from the Irippi Ontor cult. He was actually a powerful member of the cult until he betrayed his god by divulging cult secrets. He was present when Palamtales was sworn in and knew at that time that Palamtales was split. Now, however, the spirit of reprisal has addled his mind, and he cannot communicate in a straightforward manner. If he's asked about the murders, he'll grow concerned and earnestly try to explain what he knows. Unfortunately, he must speak in the most general of terms.

**"The sins of the father are visited upon the son."** (Refers to Palamtales childhood abuse and the ongoing reaction to it.)

**"The hand that writes can also rub out."** (Refers to Derontis' cover up of evidence.)

**"The wound will not stop bleeding until it is healed."** (The murders will continue until Palamtales' two souls are reunited.)

**"A hot fire burns deep."** (Refers to the revolt at the mines.)

**"Fear not the dagger, but the hand that wields it."** (Refers to Derontis' employment of Bully Boy)

**"Unrequited love can bring much sorrow."** (Refers to Derontis' love of Palamtales.)

**"A hot head blows much smoke."** (Refers to Quintalos Rhyoleth.)

### Confrontation with Derontis

PCs are brought forth to meet with Derontis. Observant PCs may note that they are escorted through the servant's entrance to the villa rather than the main gate. Several guards stand outside the door as the PCs are lead into Derontis's chambers. Derontis dismisses the guards and looks upon the party with mild irritation. "Since Palamtales is preoccupied with the situation at the mines, he has asked me to meet to review your progress." A Human Lore roll notes that Derontis is speaking of governor in a rather familiar manner. "I must say that you have disappointed even my limited expectations, despite the governor's high hopes. I had hoped you would at least accomplish something. Instead, I have to rescue you from local scum and malcontents." He sighs. "Very well. What have you been able to discover?" The characters may relate their findings, but Derontis is unimpressed. "Nothing significant, I see. Well, obviously we can't have you running loose while the city is under martial law. Since you have demonstrated violent tendencies, perhaps we can put these to good use. You may already know that some rather foolish Orlanthis have taken it upon themselves to "liberate" Carmania. In their grand scheme, they have taken over the Brass Mountain mines. They will not hold them for long. The ringleader of this uprising is a fellow by the name of Grisson Olav. Removing him would relieve the tension of the situation. Thankfully, I have information regarding an unused entrance to the mines located on the far side of the mountain. A small party could infiltrate the mines, find Grisson and eliminate him, freeing our troops to restore

order."

If the PCs refuse, they'll be taken back in the pit. At this point, they get a chance to break free. As they are walking, several townspeople appear to be engaged in a fight of some kind. The guards are momentarily distracted, and PCs have a chance to break free. Their chances are improved when the townspeople rush at the guards. These are actually Orlanthis who know the PCs connection with Palamtales and seek information on his plans for the mines.

If the characters join the raid, their equipment is returned and they are allowed to prepare themselves. Guards tell PCs to wear cloaks over their armor, and late that night, they are lead to a warehouse. Inside is an oarless, sailless Lunar airship floating several feet above the ground. A crew of six Lunars join the PCs in boarding the ship. The roof is rolled open, and the ship ascends into the moonless night. As the ship rises, the captain fills the PCs in on the details of the hidden entrance. On the far side of the mountains, the PCs disembark onto a narrow dusty trail leading up the side of the mountain.

### Grisson's Peace Plan

The PCs are barely inside the secret entrance when they are surrounded by torchwielding miners with crossbows, mallets, sledgehammers and picks. They are given a chance to surrender, and it should be clear that although they might kill quite a few miners, they are greatly outnumbered. Surrendering PCs have their weapons confiscated and are led through the tunnels to Grisson. As leader of the moderate

Orlanthis, Grisson is more interested in saving life and avoiding a bloodbath. He hopes to make use of the current situation to negotiate as much as possible, but he does not wish to let it devolve into open battle, for he knows the rebels are hopelessly outmatched. The PCs are the first Lunarian agents he's seen since the takeover of the mines, and he is interested in discovering their purpose and using it to his people's advantage. "What is your purpose here? Who sent you?" If PCs tell the truth, a Human Lore roll reveals that Grisson attaches some importance to the PCs being sent by Derontis as opposed to Palamtales. If the PCs refuse to answer, he respectfully accepts their silence. At some point, Grisson lets down his guard. Human Lore rolls reveal that this is genuine. "Very well. I agree that we each have our own interests at heart, and that they do not coincide. I believe, however, that in this instance we both have common interests. I don't want a war that will ultimately result in a massacre for my people, and Palamtales would not wish to have his authority in the district under question by his superiors. There are, unfortunately, others in my camp who are acting unreasonably and have forced my hand. It behooves older and wiser heads on both sides to find a middle ground. I would like to meet with Palamtales to discuss our options. I have dealt with the governor before, and he knows my good intentions. Let's meet on neutral ground, two nights from now in the gully on the back side of the mountain. You are free to go. Relay my message to the governor." The PCs are escorted back to the trail and are given their weapons.

At this point, the PCs must decide whether or not believe Grisson and whether they have been set up by Derontis. PCs are free to break back into the mines, but it should not be easy. Guards are stationed throughout the tunnels, and can call for reinforcements easily. Should PCs travel back down the mountain, they find that the airship has left, stranding them. At this point, it will be a race for time in getting back to notify Palamtales. PCs can travel back to the entrance, and Grisson will allow them passage through the tunnels. Once they reach the Lunar lines, PCs will have to convince the troops that there is a chance for negotiation before the battle begins. GMs should feel free to place obstacles in the party's path, i.e., skeptical guards, Derontis' agents, radical Orlanthi. In any case, the PCs should arrive on Palamtales' doorstep on the same night that Grisson has scheduled the meeting and that the Lunars are scheduled to attack. With the arrival of the PCs, Palamtales will hastily send out orders to hold off their attack and make arrangements to travel to the meeting place.

### The Final Confrontation

The PCs and the Lunarian contingent arrive at one end of a small ravine where the Orlanthi troops await. Troops bustle in the background on both sides. Palamtales, Derontis and a prominent soldier (guard captain) will comprise the Lunar negotiators. Grisson, Quintalos and an Orlanthi miner make up the Orlanthi team. The six converge on the center of the ravine holding up white flags. The PCs should be able to see the exchange fairly clearly 20 feet away, and can pick up snatches of conversation. The six talk quietly for

several hours. PCs should be able to see that Quintalos is the most obstinate of the group and loses patience easily; Grisson, however, manages to calm him down several times. Palamtales is a canny and patient negotiator, and finally the group seems to reach some sort of consensus, and the tension leaves their faces. At this point, Grisson reaches out and clasps Palamtales on the shoulder, and says, "We should feel proud of ourselves, son, for we have brought peace back from the teeth of war. Suddenly, Palamtales' face twists and contorts as a distorted ghostly arm seems to emanate forth from the real arm. It reaches out and grasps Grisson by the throat, tearing his head from his body. Grisson gurgles horribly as his twitching body falls to the ground. Then, the rest of the ghostly body surges forth into the night while Palamtales' real body goes slack and also falls. The ghostly body is now completely visible and looks strangely to have the physical proportions of a child, but one of adult size. It quickly becomes obvious that there is a striking resemblance to Palamtales, almost as if this were a distorted, childish version of the grown man, grown obscenely powerful. The spirit, of course, is Malatese.

A heartbeat passes before the miner and the guard captain move to attack, but they are too slow, and the Lunar is ripped in half. Derontis falls upon Palamtales' body, sobbing and wailing uncontrollably while Quintalos stares in wide-eyed horror. At this point, the referee should ask the PCs what actions they are taking. If the PCs attack Malatese, resolve the battle normally, using either spirit or physical combat. Should they attempt to harm Palamtales' body, Derontis will savagely defend him. If

### Stopping Malatese

There are several ways the PCs can deal with Malatese. The simplest requires the PCs understand the nature of Malatese. The spirit is a demon form, spawned out of Palamtales' subconscious and created as a result of the abuse he suffered at the hands of his father first, and later, his stepfather. A simple declaration, such as "Your father is dead—you don't need to kill him anymore" will cause the spirit to undergo a transformation. Upon hearing the words, it will mature before their eyes and re-enter Palamtales, healing him of his curse. The more difficult method involves overcoming Malatese directly through a combination of spirit and physical combat. A third option, which is the messiest of the three, is simply killing Palamtales; however this will not destroy Malatese. This will simply cut him loose and exorcise him from the immediate area. He will roam as a rogue spirit, ready to possess other victims. Also, killing Palamtales has the effect of causing instability throughout the region, and players should make an Idea roll to realize this.

they do nothing, Derontis continues to wail, "All is lost, our precious secret is no more! They know! They know!"

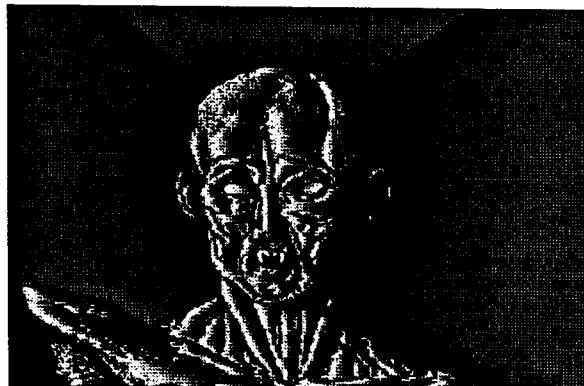
Finally, Derontis rises. "Yes. There is a way." He looks up at the demon and walks toward it, exclaiming, "You must kill them all! They must be silenced. Your secret must remain undiscovered. Only I can know. Only I can protect him." Malatese turns toward Derontis and focuses him in his petulant gaze. "Yes, Derontis. *All* must die." Then he reaches out and disembowels him.

Malatese will continue to attack members of both armies until PCs find some way to stop him. Malatese's attention will be drawn to the PCs if they attack Palamtales' body or if they approach. Maltese has the ability to

attack in spirit combat or use magic points to become corporeal and attack physically.

### **Aftermath**

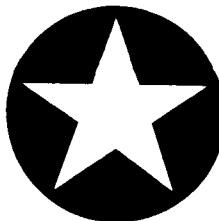
Piles of bodies litter the ground. Sometime after the battle, Quintalos emerges, shaken, from behind a nearby rock. He is quick to agree to any negotiated settlement, having seen true battle for the first time in his life. Much will depend on how the PCs handled Malatese. If Palamtales is still alive, the settlement is kept as it was arranged, and stability is quickly re-established. If Palamtales is dead, Quintalos seeks out the commander of the Lunars in order to extend the truce, so that negotiations can reoccur.



# Flight by Committee

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The Art of the Kill  
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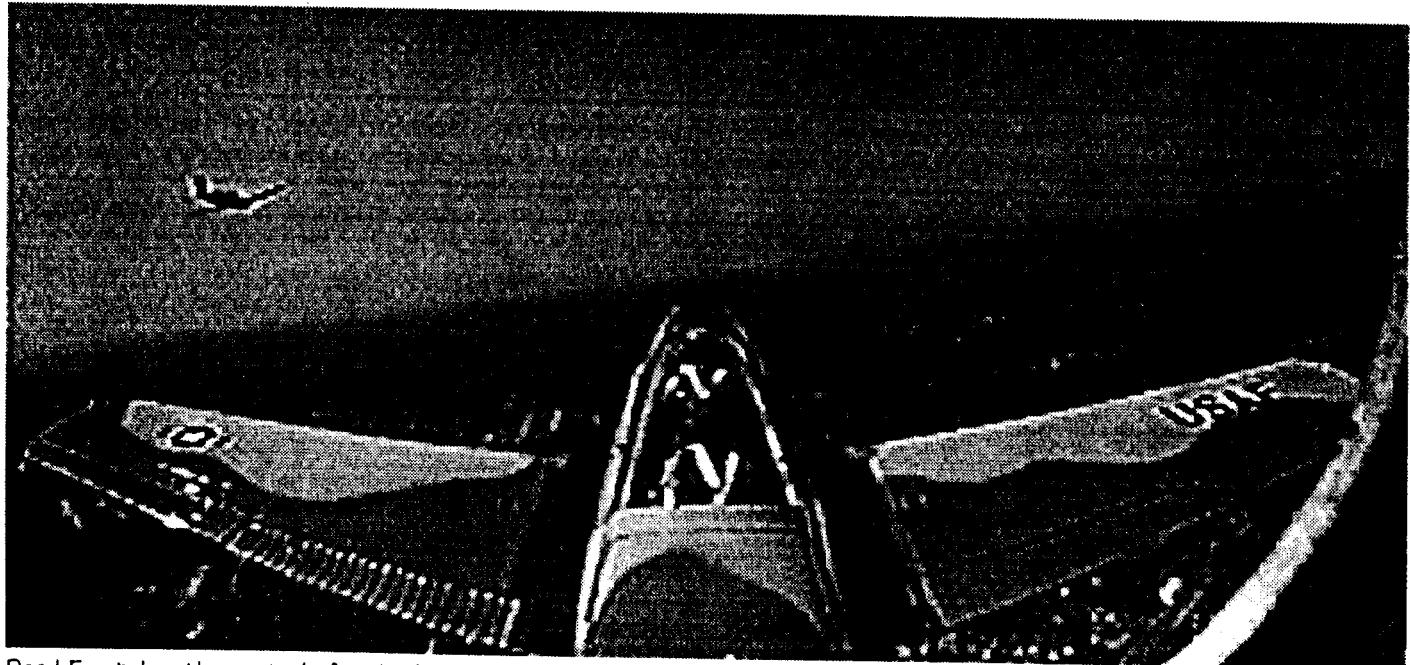
Hellcats  
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Mostly, I'm a desktop gamer. I have my own little circle of friends. We like the Hero System rules. We originally got together doing superhero games, but have been doing saberpunk cyberfantasy of late. Occasionally we step out and do something radical. Three of us are active or former Society for Creative Anachronism fighters, doing full weight blunted weapon and full weight armor melee. I do a little I.F.G.S. lightweight padded sword no armor. I also run the occasional convention all weekend live action run.

Last month I redefined 'radical'. I hit the high frontier of live action fantasy role playing. Take your basic laser tag equipment. Extend the range to 1,500 feet. Attach the laser sensors to the rear of a Beech T-34A Mentor two seat single engine trainer airplane, and have them trigger an air show style smoke system when a hit is detected. Attach the laser to fire forward from the wing of the T34. Multiply the above equipment by two. Get an FAA variance to allow formation flying. Add a second pilot (who knows what he is doing) in each plane to watch for other aircraft, enforce safety rules, coach, and get the plane on and off the ground. Finish it off with the

traditional live action role playing injury liability waivers. (While the Society for Creative Anachronism is now requiring waivers for dance practices, waivers for dogfighting are quite understandable.)

Like most live action games, the Sky Warriors experience is centered on a very interesting combat system. There are four rules, three for safety, and one to keep down the expenses. 1) No head on attacks. If both pilots are striving to point their aircraft at the other, the flight could be cut abruptly short. All attacks must be made from behind the 3 O'clock through 9 O'clock positions. 2) Get no closer than 500 feet from the other guy. This is quite close enough. 3) Three thousand feet is the floor. A plane which goes below that altitude has 'hit the ground and crashed'. They started my fights around seven thousand feet, and we got nowhere near that low. On days with low clouds or two experienced and equal pilots, the floor altitude becomes more relevant. 4) The NPC safety pilot controls the throttle, not the PC pilot. They had a PC pilot throttle the engine down to zero during a hard dive, which resulted in a blown engine. This is expensive. There are additional rules enforced by



Dead Eye takes the controls for the first time. Lesson number one? Formation flying! Just keep the number on the front of Dead Meat's plane lined up with the line where his flap and aileron meet on his wing. The video is not as steady as this still. This shot is taken from a fish eye camera mounted on the rudder. The T34's wings are not curved, nor are they as short as they look from this camera. The other plane is closer than it looks, but not so close as it seemed at the time...

the safety pilot which occur so rarely they don't bother to brief the players in what to avoid. Certainly, none got invoked in my flight, though I suspect nearing the red line do not exceed speed would cause the safety pilot to intervene.

The end result weak on role playing, but ever so strong in wargaming, ego trip, and historical interest. Perhaps it's not the ultimate fantasy, but would anyone care to nominate anything else?

As usual when I describe a new form of FRP, I'm going to have to be creative in describing the experience. A play script seems necessary this time around. The cast of characters are...

Bob "Mongo" McCarty. Safety pilot of the lead plane. He's a former Marine attack plane pilot, who flew A4s and A7s among other aircraft before joining Sky Warriors. According to Grouchy, he is a "typical dumb Marine."

Bob "Dead Meat" Fink. A typical NPC strawman. His function is to get shot down by the player character hero, yours truly. Alas, he had delusions of grandeur, based purely on having paid as much money as I for taking part in this adventure. He actually thought he was the hero, and tried to attack me!

Jeff "Grouchy" Kanarich. One of Disney's Seven Dwarves. Flew an A10 for the Air Force during Desert Storm, and various other unimportant aircraft. (According to Mongo, any plane flown by the Air Force but not the Marines is an unimportant aircraft.) Sky Warriors employee and safety pilot for the Hero of the day...

Bob "Dead Eye" Butler. Unfortunately, Dead Eye came under a bad case of split personality on this trip. I had the severe misfortune of having studied air to air combat, but had never flown an aircraft before. Also, I hadn't checked my mailbox the day before the flight, and thus did not read Sky Warrior's pamphlet on how to shoot down other T34s. As a result, I went in trying to combine assorted conflicting bits of advice from several different sources. Thus, the Bob Butler Flight by Committee Committee was formed...

Helcats. This is a nice flight simulator for WW II Pacific Front air combat. The Helcats aspect of my persona is an excellent stick and rudder man, assuming gravity doesn't do anything strange and the control stick doesn't fight back. The Hellcat persona's tactics are also flawed by the fact that the Hellcat can out turn all simulated opponents. All one has to do to win in Helcats is turn real hard inside any bandits. Alas, the two T34s flown by Sky Warriors are identical...

Sky Warriors. Before we took off, we were briefed in one defensive maneuver, the hard turn, and one offensive maneuver, the High Yo Yo. Before the free form dogfight we practiced said maneuvers, and took some target practice at each other. Interestingly enough, the

High Yo Yo is the proper offensive counter to the hard turn, which is the most basic defensive maneuver. The result is "Fixed Script Gaming," as the offensive and defensive aircraft take turns executing the only moves they know.

(As regular readers of The Wild Hunt well know, I hate Fixed Scripts. The objective of any creative gamer is to break the Fixed Script. The real solution to the Fixed Script problem in dogfighting is to return to Sky Warriors for their second, third, and fourth lectures on shooting down other T34s. At each lecture they teach a few more maneuvers, and drill them before each set of fights. By the fourth trip, there ought to be no Fixed Script problem at all. Alas, this review was written before checking my mailbox, and reviewing the outlines for lessons two, three and four. It thus records my Hellcat persona's desire to break script.)

The Art of the Kill. This is a book and video combination published by Spectrum Holobyte as a companion to their F-16 Falcon flight simulator. It teaches the basics of one on one fighter combat using a limited number of principles. The most important ones follow. Figure out where the bad guy is going to be. Roll your aircraft until your lift vector points towards where the bandit will be. (The lift vector is an imaginary line that points straight up relative to the aircraft. It is the direction the nose of the plane will move when you pull back on the stick, which is the only direction the nose can be turned in any hurry.) After pointing the lift vector towards the bandit's future, pull back on the stick to move the nose towards the bad guy. While turning, preserve your speed. Turning bleeds off speed. The ideal turning speed of an F-16 is 450 knots, which is roughly twice the red line do not exceed speed of Sky Warrior's T-34s. To be able to turn into your opponent effectively in an F16, one has to dive or use afterburner to get as close as possible to 450 knots, or at least closer to 450 than one's opponent.

Interestingly, the Art of the Kill directly contradicts the Sky Warriors approach in a couple of areas. The Sky Warriors teach move and counter move. See a hard turn? Do a High Yo Yo. Art Kill says this approach is dated and obsolete. One must know the principles and be fluid, as in combat one does not execute precise maneuvers or scripted counters. On the other hand, Art Kill assumes the student has infinite flight simulator time available, while the Sky Warriors have two hours to brief pilots with zero flight time for real planes. This time limit does effect teaching styles.

The Art of the Kill also suggests avoiding High Yo Yos, the first offensive maneuver taught by Sky Warriors. F4 Phantoms used to do High Yo Yos. F16s are "more maneuverable" and can get on the tail of an enemy who tries a High Yo Yo. I had two great questions resulting from combining Art Kill and Sky Warriors. Why do F4s and T34s do Yo Yos, while F16s do not? Also, what is the best turning speed of the T34?

Meanwhile, both Art Kill and Sky Warriors ignored the

major lesson of Hellcats. As Pappy Boyington puts it, never fight fair. Always cheat. Know a maneuver that your plane can do, that the other plane can't. When in trouble, execute that maneuver and the bad guy is off your tail. For a Hellcat evading a Zero in my simulator, that maneuver is a continuous turn. For a Hellcat avoiding a Frank, you must climb while making the continuous turn. For a Zero avoiding a Hellcat, the maneuver is a tight loop. For a Frank evading a Hellcat, fly straight and level. The Frank is a faster plane. For a T34 evading a T34, the important breakout maneuver is determined by...

Stomach. This is the most important organ in the human body when a novice attempts dogfighting. It's function is to decide whether breakfast should remain inside the pilot, or whether it should be distributed through out the T34's cockpit. (Well, other pilots have fewer troubles with their stomach, and might instead have grey out problems as their blood is pulled from their brains by G force. Other pilots are just too timid on their first flight to bank the plane 80 degrees and go for three or four G turns. Some have none of these problems, so the aircraft is the performance limit. My limit, however, was the gut.) Stomach is thus the arch rival of Hellcats. If Dead Eye's stomach is stronger than Dead Meat's stomach, the Hellcat persona's tight turn tactics work perfectly. If on the other hand Dead Eye's stomach allows Dead Meat's plane to turn tighter, sing doom and play taps.

While Stomach is the major player among the Dead Eye Committee's organs, minor bit parts are played by Hands, Feet, Eyes, Voice, and Brains. In the following dialogue, only Mongo, Grouchy and Voice are speaking aloud. The other members of the Flight Committee are holding an intense but silent inner debate. We pick up the action about a minute into the first dogfight. Dead Meat is (alas) on Dead Eye's tail...



Stomach : "Please? Would you fly straight and level for a minute?"

Art Kill : "This is a single circle fight. First plane to fly straight, dies."

Hellcats : "He's right. Gotta keep turning. Turn hard enough, long enough, we'll get a shot."

Stomach : "We must have done a half dozen circles already! Gotta ease off. I said ease off now!"

Grouchy : "Nice move! Nice move! He almost had us, and you flew us out of trouble."

Hellcats : "So much for the hard turn as the ideal defensive maneuver, followed by an ease off to regain speed. Dead Meat knows the counter for that, the High Yo Yo. Slow steady pressure is better."

Art Kill : "Yep. Stay with it. If you do start losing speed though, we've got lots of altitude available. Just

drop the nose to regain speed in a dive instead of easing off the turn. Now would be a good time."

Hellcats : "More bank then... Going down..."

Body and head are twisted around to the left and rear, keeping track of the enemy rather than watching where the plane is going. In the rear seat, Grouchy's head is on a pivot, watching for other aircraft as well as tracking the fight. Both planes are running counter clockwise in a circle, with Dead Meat a few thousand feet behind. The T34's engine is running all out, generating it's full 300 horses.

Stomach : "Owww!"

Grumpy : "Pull up! Pull up! You've got too much speed!"

Ear : "Isn't the propeller making an awful lot of noise?"

Eyes : "Where is the horizon? (Body and head turn forward. Expletive deleted.) Too much dive!"

Sky Warriors : "Level the wings. Pull back on the stick. Wow! So that's what the books mean when they say the controls get stiff when the plane gets moving fast. This stick just does not want to move. Pull hard anyway, and we've got lots of Gs. Better take it a bit easy coming up."

Stomach : "That's right!"

Engine : "**ROAR!** ROAR! Roar! Rumble!"

Art Kill : "That was definitely much faster than our best turning speed. We can't let the nose drop that low. Let's keep things slower."

Sky Warriors : "Lose sight! Lose the fight! You've spent too much time looking forward at the horizon and



Eyes always on the bad guy. Lose sight, lose the fight! Here, yours truly has his eyes on his seven O'clock. This is the "Hero Camera" positioned on the front seat pilot.

getting back into your turn. Find the bandit, now!"

Eyes : (Expletive Deleted!)

Voice : "I've lost him!"

Hellcats, Sky Warriors : "Keep turning!"

Stomach : "No!"

Grouchy : "He's at your Seven O'clock, right behind you."

Eyes : "Uh oh."

Voice : "I've got him!"

Hellcats, Art Kill, Sky Warriors : "Right on our tail, and far too close! Time for a last ditch panic maneuver."

Stomach. "Time for a what?"

Art Kill : "Do a hard out of plane maneuver. The circle we're going around defines a two dimensional plane where all the action is. Get out of that plane! Roll at least eighty degrees in either direction, then pull back on the stick as hard as you can. Don't bother to conserve speed! St. Peter won't be impressed by how fast you were going when you died."

Stomach : "No! Absolutely, positively, no!"

Sky Warriors : "Pull back briefly on the stick in a hard turn. When he goes up in his Yo Yo, relax the turn to conserve speed."

Art Kill : "That isn't working. He'll just finish the High Yo Yo, and we'll be right back where we started from. Change your bank at least 80 degrees, and pull hard enough to cause an overshoot!"

Stomach : "No. Hellcat's steady turn has been working. Stay with it."

Hellcats : "No joy. With Stomach's complaints, my bank is down to 20 degrees, which means we must be pulling an awesome one point zero zero two Gs. It's just a matter of time before he gets us."

Computer : "Beeeeep!"

Grouchy : "Knock it off! Knock it off!"

Stomach : "We're dead? We can level off now? O joy! O rapture!"

Voice : "Would you take the plane?"

Grouchy : "You can keep it if you'd like."

Voice : "I'd just like to crack my cockpit and get some cool air. I'll take her right back."

Grouchy : "I have the plane."

Voice : "You have the plane."

Grouchy : "The top latch."

Voice : "Got it. Now I can't seem to latch it at six inches."

Grouchy : "Just leave it free. It will stay."

Voice : "Fine. It seems the only controls difficult to operate in this whole airplane are the latches to the cockpit. I'll take the plane."

Grouchy : "Whenever you're ready."

Voice : "I have the plane."

Grouchy : "You have the plane."

Voice : "I'll follow well behind Mongo, just to keep track of where he is."

Grouchy : "Keep him off to the side, at about eleven O'clock. I'm right behind you, and can't see too well through your head. That's good."

Sky Warriors : "You going to be OK?"

Stomach : "I'll be fine. Give me a minute, and a little more cool air."

Hellcats : "We aren't going to do too well unless you join the team."

Stomach : "Just no more of that zero G and negative G stuff. Unless we're straight and level, keep a good firm pull back on the stick, so breakfast is pulled down, not up."

Sky Warriors : "Can do."

Stomach : "And don't touch the rudder pedals!"

Hellcats : "We'll need them to line up the final shot at end game."

Stomach : "I suppose..."

Art Kill : "As if we'll ever get a shot off. What happened? We had the upper hand a couple of times. He had it several times. I'd feel a lot better if I knew how to gain or lose the edge."

Grumpy : "During that fight, did you notice how we had an advantage when we were high, and he was all over us when we got low? Keep your nose up. If you pick up too much speed, your turning radius gets huge."

Art Kill : "OK. Got it! The best turning speed of this airplane is slower than the speed at which we start the fight. By going nose up, we slow down, and can turn the

nose faster while pulling less Gs. I'll bet that's why T34s and F4s do High Yo Yos, while F16s don't. The F16's best turn speed is fast, so he wants to stay low. With this plane though, climbing just high enough to bleed off a few knots of airspeed is a win!"

Sky Warriors : "What should we do next time, then?"

Stomach : "How about continuing straight ahead after the initial head on pass? He'll have to lose speed turning to get our tail. He'll never catch us!"

Wallet : "At six hundred fifty dollars for one flight, we are not playing for a tie."

Hellcats : "We turn right hard, or turn left hard. All fights are circle fights. We went towards the bandit last time, how about turning away this time?"

Sky Warriors : "Hell, no. You'd just be giving him your tail."

Art Kill : "You lie. If one plane breaks hard left after a head on pass, and the other hard right, that's called a two circle fight. One plane is going clockwise, one counter clock, and at least once every time around the circle you get a chance at a head on shot."

Hellcats : "Art Kill is right. It happens to me all the time. I don't like two circle fights, though. I can never keep track of the bad guy, and can't line up the head on shot quick enough."

Sky Warriors : "Head on shots are dangerous. Head on shots are against the rules. There are no laser sensors on the front of the plane, so head on shots just won't work. Forget this two circle fight."

Art Kill : "You go for two circle fights if you want separation between the planes. You do it if you have missiles left, but you don't think the other guy does. You do it if you might want to break off the fight. On the other hand, if you want a close in gun kill, you should turn the same way as the other plane, and do a one circle fight."

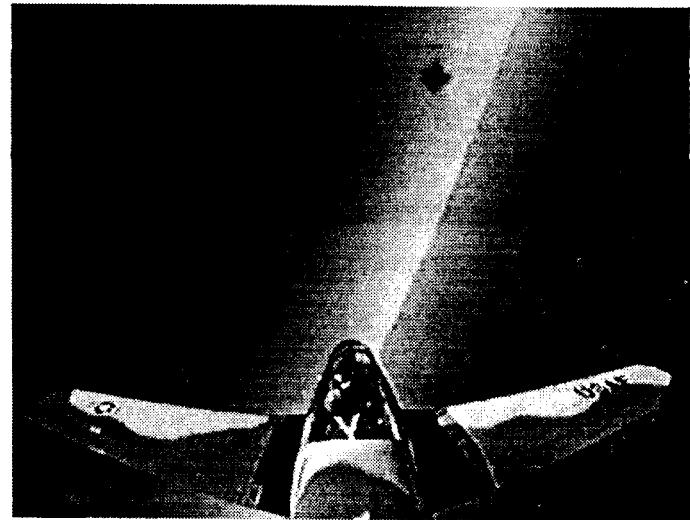
Sky Warriors : "Missiles? I think it's safe to say that both aircraft are all out of missiles."

Hellcats : "Then we're following the script. We turn hard towards the enemy."

Art Kill : "You're assuming Dead Meat is going to do as you expect. That's dangerous. If you want to be sure of a single circle fight, you have to watch which way the other guy breaks, and turn the same way."

Hellcats : "Dead Meat knows nothing but what Sky Warriors told him. He was told that turning away from the enemy is bad. He'll turn towards us. The first plane to turn and turn hard wins an edge. We can't afford to wait on him."

Sky Warriors : "Besides, these guys know these



Opening gambit. Hard bank to the enemy, nose up a bit, and pull! (The obvious thing to do!)

airplanes and this set up. I'll bet Grouchy and Mongo are right. When you guys start a head on fight, you're right on top of each other exchanging gun shots. At jet speeds with no separation, you get two circle fights. At prop speeds with a five hundred foot safety separation, you want to bet a T34 can't close to a single circle? If Dead Meat turns away while we turn towards, we should end up on his tail. It's a win win choice."

Hellcats : "I don't want to follow the script exactly, though. Let's do something a little different. Let's not turn level, but go a little high, or a little low."

Art Kill : "Low is bad. The best turning speed on a T34 is slow, remember? If we go down, we pick up speed and get a stiff stick. Just a little bit of climb should give us an advantage."

Sky Warriors : "Fine. On the 'fight's on' call, we bank hard towards the enemy, pull Gs, and go just a little bit nose up."

Art Kill : "All this talk, and what do we end up doing? Put the lift vector on the enemy and pull! This whole business is a lot simpler than you think."

Mongo : "Are you guys ready? I'll go south a bit, and in a minute we'll turn around and set up for a right wing to right wing pass."

Voice : "All set."

Grouchy : "We're ready for ya!"

Sky Warriors : "Too bad. I wanted a left to left opening."

Art Kill : "What's the difference?"

Sky Warriors : "You have to turn your shoulders towards the enemy to keep track of where he is. On the opening pass, you just can't sit straight as he flashes by"

going in the opposite direction. Lose sight, lose the fight. This is a right handed airplane. This joystick is definitely a right hand grip. The throttle is mounted on the left. Twisting body and head left for a counter clockwise fight, the right hand can easily reach the stick. Turning right, it's a damn uncomfortable stretch. I know Grouchy said to try flying left handed, but..."

Hellcats : "I know. I always fly with my right hand."

Grouchy : "You're all closed up? Take the plane when you're ready."

Voice : "I have the plane."

Grouchy : "You have the plane. Turn to set up a right to right pass."

Eyes : "Oops."

Voice : "I've lost him."

Grouchy : "I have the plane."

Voice : "You have the plane."

Hellcats : "I don't like that paint job!"

Sky Warriors : "Hey! That's the 'Aggressor' camouflage pattern. It's used at Top Gun, Red Flag and other high class fighter training bases such as Charley Brown airport. It's sexy. Chicks dig it."

Hellcats : "Haze grey blotches over sky blue? I believe that pattern was designed by the Soviet Air Force to absolutely disappear in the haze layer. We've got two pilots who have never flown before, their eyes are only on each other, and both aircraft are painted to look like empty sky? I've got good eyes. I've been spotting planes before Grouchy regularly. The only plane I can't find is Dead Meat's. I think the old World War II Navy trainer paint job is also 'sexy', with the deep blue body, screaming primary yellow wings and control surfaces. That pattern was designed for visibility and safety!"

Grouchy : "He's at your one O'clock, just to the right of the gunsight, and down a bit in the haze."

Voice : "I've got him."

Grouchy : "Take the plane."

Voice : "I have the plane."

Grouchy : "You have the plane. Go nose down a bit to match altitudes. Just as our wings pass, I'll yell 'fight's on!' Turn hard right *immediately*, and put your nose up just a little."

Art Kill : "Well, that makes it unanimous."

Hellcats : "So much for varying the fixed script."

Sky Warriors : "He said the exact same thing last time. Did either of you listen? Nooooo..."

Art Kill : "Following fixed scripts without understanding the principles is a dead end. You have to have the theory!"

Hellcats : "Stop arguing, you two. Here he comes!"

Body : "Twisting right."

Eyes : "Approaching three O'clock.... Wait... Wait... Now!"

Grouchy : "Fight's on! Fight's on!"

Head : "Twisting right."

Hellcats : "I usually bank about seventy degrees. You're going to have to pull real hard at that angle to keep your nose up! Be ready to relax the bank angle if the nose starts to drop!"

Eyes : "He's turning right!"

Art Kill : "Single circle fight, clockwise!"

Hellcats : "On script."

Sky Warriors : "Pulling! This feels like a couple or three Gs, just a bit stronger than last fight. Call the roll."

Inner Ear : "No problem!"

Back : "This is easy! Haven't had trouble yet!"

Stomach : "You're pulling straight to the seat. No trouble so far. I can't do this all day, though."

Sky Warriors : "No little mice sounds coming from the wing. We aren't near a stall yet. The plane has more turn left in it if we need it!"

Hellcats : "We need it! He's settling into position exactly opposite us in the circle. If we want his tail, we've got to turn a tighter circle! Our nose is still up, though."

Sky Warriors : "I'll pull a little harder, then. Sorry, tummy. It'll end the fight sooner, though."

Stomach : "It had better. No problems yet, but..."

Hellcats : "That will do it! We're gaining on him!"

Sky Warriors : "No mice! There's still more pull available."

Hellcats : "No need! Just hold it smooth and steady."

Grumpy : "Sometimes it's best just to jump the guy quick and get it over with. Let's go for the fast kill!"

Art Kill : "Was it the Red Baron who said, 'Always down your opponent quickly, before your airsickness becomes acute'?"

Hellcats : "We're almost there..."

Grumpy : "This should look familiar. We're just behind him, and a little high. This is the perch position, where we started the Yo Yo drill. Go get him!"

Sky Warriors : "Yo Yo drill. Bank more. Drop the nose. Pick up speed. Lead pursuit. Aim our plane ahead of his plane. Since we're still travelling the smaller circle, we'll keep getting closer."

Art Kill : "That's too much lead! Only one or two plane lengths ahead of him! No more!"

Grumpy : "More lead! You've got to turn a tight circle! Get inside him!"

Hellcats : "Art Kill is right! Too much lead and you'll overshoot!"

Sky Warriors : "Guys, we're running a Yo Yo drill here! Don't you want to do a Yo Yo? Any second now, he'll do his turn."

Hellcats : "There goes the turn! I recognize this! He's right in front of us, which is good, but we're looking straight down at the top of his plane, not at his tail, which is bad. He's going to zip off the right side of the windscreens, and it's going to take forever to catch up with him again."

Art Kill : "I told you that was too much lead."

Sky Warriors : "Yo Yo maneuver. Step one. A little pressure off the stick, but still a good firm pull. Roll left until wings are about level with the horizon. This starts the climb."

Head and eyes : "Snap from straight ahead to the three O'clock position, as the bandit positions himself past our plane's right wing tip. His tail is pointed towards us, which is good, but our nose is pointed 90 degrees to his left, and 30 degrees up."

Art Kill : "OK. That climb lost us the airspeed we gained coming down from the perch. We should be at our best turning about now."

Sky Warriors : "Yo Yo, step two. Roll right. Let the right wing drop straight down. Keep pulling. This turns us towards the bandit."

Hellcats : "Dead Meat's following the script. Just like Sky Warriors told him, he's releasing from his hard turn to 'conserve speed.' When we finish this Yo Yo, he'll be right where we want him."

Eyes : "We're turning! We're behind him! We're pointing in the same direction he is! We're still above

him though!"

Sky Warriors : "Yo Yo, step three. Keep banking further to the right. We're partly inverted, now. Steady back pull continues. Hmm. Step three is just a continuation of step two's right roll while pulling, right?"

Art Kill : "And if we seem to be pulling two Gs, since we're inverted, we're really pulling three. Gravity will pull the nose down without our feeling it. Neat."

Hellcats : "Forgive me for doubting, o ye Master of Yo Yos."

Grumpy : "Put him on the top of your windscreens!"

Hellcats : "What?"

Art Kill : "Yes! Yes! Do it! The top of the windscreens is direction of the lift vector! You have to..."

Everybody, in perfect unison : "...Put the enemy on your lift vector, and pull!..."

Art Kill : (In a slightly hurt tone.) "Keep rolling right... More... More... Perfect!!! Pull!!!"

Sky Warriors : "Yo Yo step four. Pull!!!"

Stomach : "Are you absolutely sure that down is still towards the seat? It feels that way. I have no real reason to complain, but..."

Sky Warriors : "Oh yes. As long as I keep a firm pull pressure on this here artificial gravity control stick, down is towards the seat, even if we are partly inverted and in a fairly steep dive. Up is down. Down is up. You should be just fine."

Brain : "Stardance. Ender's Game. In a three dimensional environment, the key to adapting is the ability to change reference systems... The seat of your pants is down?"

Stomach : "It had better be."

Eyes : "But if the seat of our pants is down, how come most of the sky is full of hills and lakes?"

Sky Warriors : "The seat of your pants is down? No! You can't just forget about the planet! We're inverted. If we stop pulling for a moment, Mr. Stomach will complain violently!"

Art Kill : "And we're in a dive. While we're still slow now from going up the Yo Yo, we'll pick up speed real fast if we hold this line for long. Don't forget that."

Hellcats : "And yet... If the seat of the pants is down... If the top of the canopy is not only the lift vector, but the top of the monitor... If that T34 down there accurately represents a Zero done in 8 bit color... If this thing in my right hand is a joystick... This is familiar... I've done this

attack before... I like this attack! *I have the airplane!*"

Sky Warriors : "Hey! This is my Yo Yo drill!"

Art Kill : "And that's my lift vector you're pulling down!"

Sky Warriors : "He seems sure of himself, though."

Art Kill : "Who is going to argue with him?"

Grouchy : "Pull! Pull! Pull!"

Hellcats : "Pull, yes, but not too hard. Can't go to far, too fast. We only have time to do this once, so we have to do it right."

Art Kill : "Have you ever noticed how arrogant and overconfident fighter pilots are?"

Hellcats : "He's thirty degrees off the our nose. Twenty degrees.. Ten... Dead Meat... What? That round thing on top of the instrument panel is blocking my view! This monitor doesn't have any cross hairs! What's happening?"

Grouchy : "Kill the bastard!"

Sky Warriors : "That round thing is a reflective gunsight. My body was just twisted right to follow the bandit through the Yo Yo. To use the sight, the eyes must be right behind the gunsight. I'll just center myself in the chair. Got to have perfect posture. Just a second."

Hellcats : "I need that gunsight now!"

Sky Warriors : "Yo Yo drill is over. Tracking drill. I need control of the hands."

Hellcats : "Leave the hands alone. They know what they are doing. Look what they did while you were trying to line up the gunsight. Our wings are rolled level with his. There are continuous up down corrections going to the elevator, and right left to the rudder. You don't even remember the roll, do you? How much flight time do you have? One hour? Leave the hands alone! Give me that gunsight!"

Sky Warriors : "Got it! Lost it! Could you hold the plane steady for a bit?"

Hellcats : "Arrrgh! I don't need no (expletive deleted) gunsight! Just hold down the (expletive deleted) trigger!"

Computer : "Rat-a-tat-tat-tat-tat..."

Sky Warriors : "Got it!"

Computer : "...tat-tat-tat-tat..."

Sky Warriors : "Lost it!"

Computer : "...tat-tat-tat-tat..."

Art Kill : "His nose is coming up!"

Computer : "...tat-tat-tat-tat..."

Sky Warriors : "He's doing another hard turn! I'm starting a roll left. Yo Yo, step one... Going up!"

Computer : "...tat-tat-tat-tat..."

Hellcats : "OK, roll! But hold the trigger down! We should be right on him!"

Computer : "...tat-tat-tat-tat..."

Eyes : "Smoke! He's smoking!"

Hellcats : "Break left! Reverse the circle! In a real simulation, there'd be parachutes, wings and stuff flying all over the place."

Grouchy : "YAAAAAAAHOOOOOO!!!!"

Art Kill : "Did he just say, 'real simulation'?"

Mongo : "Knock it off! Knock it off!"

Sky Warriors : "This is a real simulation."

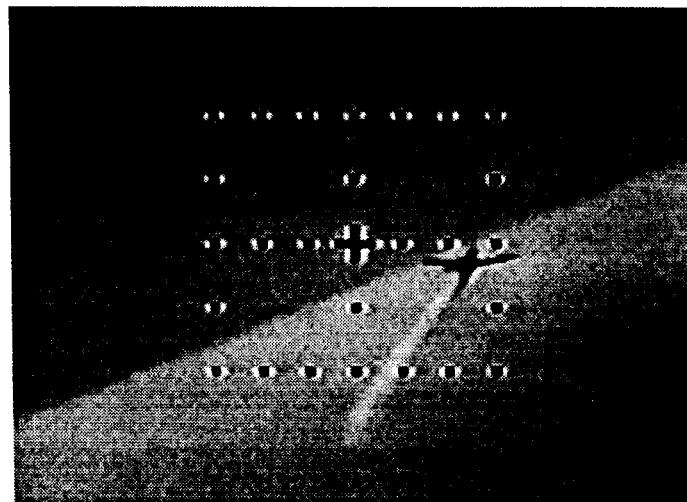
Voice : "Sloppy. But I suppose anything that works..."

Hellcats : "You have the airplane."

Sky Warriors : "Me? What do I want with an airplane which is nose down, one wing low, and heading vaguely towards a mid air collision? I've never flown before in my life."

Hellcats : "Yah, you. The fight's over. What do I know about flying a real airplane?"

*Bob Butler*



Tired of killing orcs with dice? Looking for some real excitement? Try smoking T34s!

# Reading Companion 1 YH1

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## Tales of Ralios

The morning of Windsday, Death week of Sea season, was cloudy and windy, an auspicious sign for the six members of the Belovaking clan who were to undergo the final tests of initiation.

Konall was the youngest brother of the clan thane, Ekel Field-Destroyer. He could play any musical instrument he set his hands to. He had been fostered to Hruktuk, shaman of the Ochre Top clan of the Aleci, or moose tribe.

Ekel Field-Destroyer's two daughters were also being initiated. Minara had inherited her mother Ornai's stunning beauty, as well as a chariot with bronze scythes, inlaid with lapis lazuli and shell. She had been fostered to Orlmand the Listener, Lawspeaker of the Gald-ring clan in the Nardain tribe. Una was Lina's daughter, and was noted for her fine style of dressing. People said she had the healer's gift. The sisters shared their father's love of horses, and both planned to follow Vinga's path and seek adventure.

Jornast was the son of Ekel Field-Destroyer's brother, Harstov the Saddle Maker. He had been fostered to Amagorri the Smith of the Taskenth clan, and seemed to dislike his own kinsmen.

Harmast Dailgusson was a great-grandson of Ingkel Hundred-Fighter, who had been thane when the White Horse Troop passed through. He was a large man, well-trained in the ways of war and seemed destined to become a gifted orator.

Aidin was the daughter of Dathen the Poet, and a great-granddaughter of Ingkel Hundred-Fighter. She was blessed with an excellent memory. She too planned to cut her hair and wash it with lime as a Vingan.

The first six days of the initiation were full of instruction, memorizing the seemingly endless poems that Orlanth worshipers were expected to know, hearing again how Orlanth almost destroyed the world, but then made it right, learning the rules of law that would soon apply to them. The most unusual lesson was when Halvar Stormeye, the clan's priest of Orlanth, summoned a sylph so they could learn Stormspeech.

On Windsday, all seven members of the Clan Ring were there, though Artri Madcap looked like he had just been dragged out of bed. Led by Meth the Traveler, the procession headed south into the Barren Hills, a bleak region which acted as a buffer between the Belovaking and Kortling clans, which had several active feuds. They spiraled in a counterclockwise direction, ending on a hilltop with an old three-sided standing stone. Each face had a crude figure carved in it, and one of Orlanth's runes freshly painted in yellow ochre.

Ekel raised his voice: "We are the Belovaking clan. We came here long ago, when there was famine throughout Delela, and we met Left-Stone Shouter, who helped us drive out the Naskori sorcerers so we could graze our cattle here. Our distant grandfather Aranast Hill-Poet placed this stone here so we would never forget Left-Stone Shouter.

"We are not as many as the Kortling clan, but we are braver, wiser and above all more honorable than them. This makes us a greater and stronger people. But we must not make too much of our superiority: Orlanth's virtues of generosity and justice apply equally toward the Kortling clan. Even if they are devious and shifty.

"As this will be your most important test, I cannot tell you what to expect. But I can tell you what is expected of you. An Orlanthi must

I recently started a new campaign, and I'm going to try to explain some of the decisions I made in setting it up.

After reading the *Pendragon* supplement *Pagan Shore* (Ireland as it might have been in the time of King Arthur), I decided to run a new campaign. I like games where everyone has magic, so I set the game in Glorantha, normally associated with *RuneQuest*. I use rules I call *PenDragon Pass*, which combine *Pendragon* with *RuneQuest* magic.

Since the Irish Celts had many similarities with Glorantha's Orlanthi culture, I looked for an area where I could set chariot-riding cattle-herding Orlanthi (one of my players had expressed an interest in playing a chariot warrior). The best place seemed to be Delela, in the East Wilds of Ralios (described in minimal detail in the *Glorantha* box).

I'd recently played *Earthdawn*, and was struck by how its magical talents were reminiscent of Irish sagas. I noticed that some of the abilities described in *Glorantha* for East Wilds heroes were the same as Cú Chulainn's. And I remembered Greg Stafford's talk about how heroquests could benefit the entire clan. I decided that every clan would have a heroic ability, originally gained in a heroquest performed by a clan ancestor. Each year the heroquest is reenacted by the clan's thane; if he (or she — Orlanthi allow men and women to perform non-traditional roles) succeeded, every adult at the ceremony could use the ability once that year. Many of the abilities on my list are based on *Earthdawn*.

I started everyone as young adults from the same clan. The first scenario would be an initiation into adulthood (Orlantli clans hold an initiation about once every five years). This meant that the characters would all be about the same skill, know each other, have reason to be a group, and players could learn about the background as their characters did. The players wouldn't be forced to read too much background material, and I wouldn't have to come up with reasons why they stuck together.

I followed *Pagan Shore* and had all PCs as nobles — related (within 4 generations) to a thane of their clan, and thus eligible to be elected thane. This means power politics are an option later.

I created two noble bloodlines so players would know who their relatives were. I also came up with a lot of names, since naming characters is hard work, and naming them culturally is almost impossible.

Since everyone was from the same clan, they'd have the same heroic ability. I had

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always take action, even if it is not always the right one. Seeing to it that something happens is the main thing; mistakes are made to be corrected, and also to learn from. You will probably make many mistakes — this is no cause for concern as long as you maintain the virtues of Orlanth and set things right in the end. Orlanth himself grew by admitting his errors and correcting them."

As Halvar Stormeye raised his hands, a powerful whirlwind rose around them, blurring their vision. They were swept into the air, finally coming back down in a valley that looked much like their own, but greener and brighter, with taller hills and a fast-flowing river in place of the stream.

Between them in the spot the stone had been was an odd person with legs as long as a man is tall. Aidin recognized him as a Flint Slinger, a spirit which often punishes initiates who break their vows. They gave the Orlanthi Greeting. He answered and introduced himself as Left-Stone Shouter, and said he would be their guide.

The valley contained no steads, but Left-Stone Shouter pointed them towards some trees. Sitting in them were two winged men, arguing about who had first spotted a bag of sand. Konall suggested splitting the sand, but they told him it was the bag that was magic. Minara proposed taking turns using the bag, and drawing lots to see who would have it during Sacred Time. They agreed to this, then brought them to their tree-top stead where they were greeted by the thane and given meat and water. The thane, who had magnificently dyed feathers, asked them to entertain the assembly. Konall played his flute, Harmast and Jornast told stories, and Una made whirligigs for the children. The thane was well pleased, and gave them each a feather bracelet.

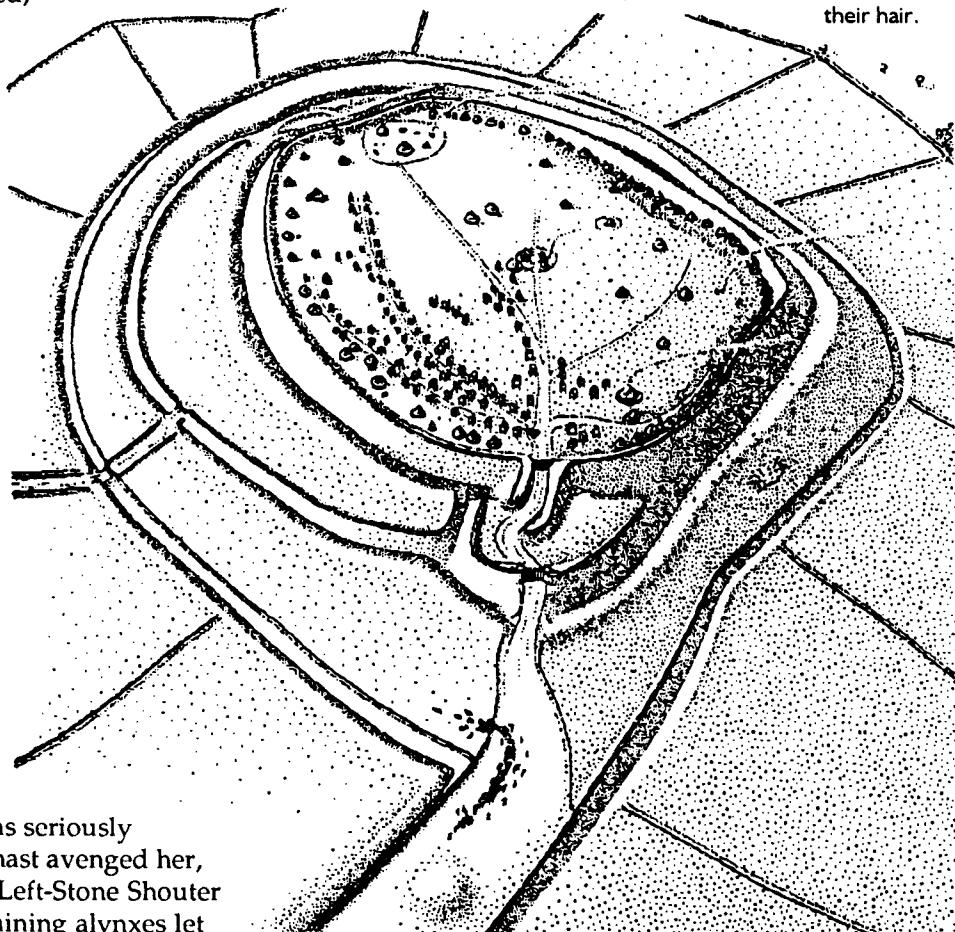
Left-Stone Shouter leaped into the air to the height of 20 men, and described the green-skinned lady he saw. When they got to her, she asked them to rescue her herd, which had been stolen by men of darkness.

They followed the tracks into what would be Kortling territory if the land truly corresponded. Six large alynxes claimed they were trespassing, and heaped insults on them. Minara challenged one to single combat, but was laid out by a vicious slash to the head. Una challenged him to avenge her sister. She allowed the alynx to stand up after he fell down, then defeated him. Jornast defeated his opponent and skinned him. Aidin fought honorably, but was seriously wounded in the stomach. Harmast avenged her, and took his opponent's head. Left-Stone Shouter healed their wounds. The remaining alynxes let them pass.

the players vote on which one. There was no consensus, but Fireblood won. I made up the accompanying geas: never extinguish a fire. Players who wanted another ability had an out: they could be fostered to a clan with a different ability. They'd have to choose each year which clan's ceremony to attend.

I was fortunate enough to run into (on the Net) a Swedish player who'd had an East Wilds campaign, and who was kind enough to share his background material. Thanks Jonas Schiött, Sten Ahrman, Dag Olausson, and Henrik Gudmundsson. I combined their material with the Irish culture from *Pagan Shore* and the Orlanthi as described in King of Sartar and wrote up some background for players.

I made the cults slightly different from the Dragon Pass versions, since the East Wilds has been described as more barbaric. Orlanth's chief wife is considered to be Ralia, not only the grain goddess but also the cow mother and the sovereignty goddess. Issaries is the Talking God, and the river god Doskior takes over Issaries's role as the Trade God. The East Ralios Orlanthi are illiterate, so Lhankor Mhy is somewhat different. Vingans use lime, rather than henna, in their hair.



A hillfort; the Orlanthi drive their herds inside if they're attacked.

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They lost the trail, but spotted a coyote, who offered to get them the cattle if one of the women slept with him. Minara scratched behind his ears and flirted with him, and managed to trick him into revealing the direction of the herd.

They set out at a trot, and soon found a cave. They fashioned torches and entered. The cows were being guarded by five trollkin and one dark troll. The trollkin were defeated easily, but the dark troll cracked Harmast's ribs before he killed it. They found lead coins with a troll head on one side and a boat on the other.

On the way back, they met a woman dressed in white. She healed Harmast, and touched the wounds of Aidin and Minara. When Konall asked her name, she replied, "You can call me Chalana Arroy."

They returned to the Green Lady, who thanked them and gave them milk. As she drove her cattle away, they found themselves lying on the ground on the hilltop, with their elders just having finished tattooing them. They each had a feather bracelet tattooed on one arm, a stylized design for defeating an alynx or troll, and a small circle for each troll coin they found.

Halvar congratulated them, and explained each event. The number of tests was more than anyone else had gone through, and Ainmir Slow-eye said this meant they were chosen by Orlanth for some great fate.

After the celebratory feast, Ekel offered to take the new adults on a cattle raid. They decided to raid Naskorion rather than the Ilmoshi clan.

Ekel and three of his housecarls, Niul, Ingolf, and Dandern, came along as guides. They stayed the first night in Wolnarhi lands. The next night they were in Naskorion. Ekel's alynx went out scouting, and reported a herd nearby. Jornast and Aidin tried to sneak up, but were spotted, and one of the guards started sounding a horn. They killed both guards, and started driving the cattle back to Delela.

Konall, who had the fastest horse, rode back and saw a group of spearmen and a rider answering the horn. The horseman, who bore a white shield with two blue circles, was riding ahead of the footmen, so they set up an ambush in some trees. The Naskori rider threw a javelin at Konall, and charged Harmast with his lance. Although he was a good rider, he couldn't manage to avoid being double-teamed, and was eventually taken down before he could ride back to his men.

Ekel distributed the plunder, and distributed the 30 cows to the two bloodlines.

The rest of the year passed uneventfully. They experienced their first High Holy Day as initiates. At Sacred Time, they participated in the clan heroquest, in which the thane reenacted the quest that gives every clan member a yearly use of Fireblood.

### Comments on #1

*Dana Erlandsen* My wife calls garden catalogs "pornography," all those seductive sex organs posed to titillate the reader. And of course they never are quite the same in the flesh...

*I'm quite impressed by the wealth of background you came up with for your Paris character. With players like you, GMs would have a lot less work to do!*

*Virgil Greene* I especially enjoyed the light bulb jokes.

*Peter Maranci* In discussing party origins, you seem to think it's a benefit to having the strange mixed parties which seem to stereotype games. More and more I've found this to be a bad feature, both as GM and as player. As GM, I have to somehow provide the rationale for why the elf and dwarf are there with the humans in the first place, let alone not coming to blows. And coming up with adventures that are appropriate for all the characters — I've had to reject otherwise great published scenarios because they took place underground, and one player had a windchild who'd never venture into a cave. From the player side, I have much the same problem — if it weren't for the sake of the community of players, my characters would either leave or kill many of their less-likely companions.

The Kortling clan and the Belovaking clan have several outstanding feuds. The alynxes (shadow cats) represent the Kortling on the hero plane. The windchildren represent the Belovaking. The rivalry seemed like a good way to illustrate the single combats of the Orlanthi.

I was pleased that Minara managed to use Flirting and trick the coyote into revealing their direction. Tricksters are supposed to be tricked.

The players had wondered how they'd bring stuff back from the heroquest, and the Orlanthi are fond of tattoos...

All Belovaking start with the Pendragon Passion of Hate Naskorion, so a raid on Naskorion was a likely choice.

The Wolnarhi are a friendly clan. Ekel is a rune lord of Orlanth, so he has an alynx as his allied spirit.

The Naskori horseman rode ahead, Criticized his Proud, and attacked despite seeing an ambush.

The hardest part was trying to figure out how Ekel divided the loot — there weren't enough swords and horses to give one to everyone, and no one person really stood out in the raid.

Fireblood heals Honor in HP in an impressive burst of flame and steam.

## Mythology

Orlanth, the God of Storm, challenged Yelm, the Sun Emperor, for rulership of the gods. He killed Yelm, and plunged the world into the Lesser Darkness.

The Greater Darkness began when chaos entered the world. Many gods died in the ensuing struggles, including Genert, the god of the land. Urox the Storm Bull led the defenders and managed to defeat the Devil.

Meanwhile, Orlanth and his companions set out on the Lightbringer's Quest to rescue Yelm from Hell. After many trials, they succeeded, and Yelm returned to the sky in the first dawn.

## History

During the First Age, a god was created in Dorastor. His worshipers called him Nysalor the Bright One. Harmast Barefoot, a farmer from Corolaland, was the first human to enact the Lightbringer's Quest, returning with a knight named Arkat to combat Nysalor's empire. Arkat unmasked Nysalor as Gbaji the Deceiver, and used all possible means to defeat him, performing many heroquests and even becoming a troll. Ralios was the theatre for much of Arkat's 75-year campaign against Gbaji, which culminated in the destruction of both the god and his homeland. Arkat then retired to Ralios and with his troll allies founded the Empire of Peace.

The Second Age was dominated by the Jrusteli God Learners from the west, and the Empire of the Wyrms Friends to the east. The Jrusteli conquered and plundered Arkat's Empire, and by reckless heroquesting were able to twist the world. They were overthrown by many people who allied with the gods to restore the cosmos. Part of their demise was a mighty spell which closed the oceans to travel.

The Empire of the Wyrms Friends enjoyed a close relationship with dragons and their kin. Ingolf Dragonfriend from the Garanazar clan was one of their heroes. When the EWF became corrupt, Alakoring Dragonbreaker of the Dobuni clan fought them. Finally, the dragonewts rose and crushed the empire.

The most noteworthy event so far in the Third Age was the rising of the Red Moon to the northeast. An empire was founded by the worshipers of the Red Goddess, but they have had little contact with Ralios.

In 1413 King Bailifes the Hammer took most of Safelster, driving refugees into Vesmonstran and East Ralios.

In 1499, all communication with Fronela to the north was mysteriously cut off. Travelers over High Llama Pass find only a trackless miasma.

## People

The many tribes of East Ralios share a common culture, called Orlanthi after their chief god.

The Orlanthi live by herding and farming. Cattle provide milk and meat, and sheep provide wool. Growing wheat is seen as a sign that you can't afford a herd, but it's important for brewing beer.

Families live in round buildings with conical thatched roofs. These can be quite large, and are sometimes found in ringforts or hillforts, huge earth and wood structures large enough to hold the herds in times of trouble.

The clan is the most important social organization, owning all land, and their own unique magic. Clans frequently form into tribes to further common goals. Tribes

occasionally join into temporary kingdoms, usually to deal with an external threat. The clan thane and tribal king are each assisted by a council, or Ring.

People are ranked as thanes, carls, cottars, or thralls. There is much mobility between classes, and the clan thane is elected from a large group of eligible kin.

Men are feisty, unpredictable, and passionate while women are calm, calculating and possessed. Although each gender has their own roles, there are no firm rules, and women often become housecarls or kings.

Marriage is a partnership, with husband and wife sharing in property. Children are part of the husband's clan. They're frequently fostered, and are initiated into adulthood with various tests.

The Orlanthi believe in spirits and gods which guide everything, and interpret events as being of divine origin. People are protected from the supernatural and harmful fates by geases, which prohibit dangerous behavior.

The major deities worshipped are:

*Orlanth*: King of the World, storm god, culture hero, men's god.  
*Ralia*: Cow Mother, Wheat Goddess, Land Goddess, women's goddess.

*Issaries*: The Talking God, god of travel and heralds

*Lhankor Mhy*: The Knowing God, lawspeaker

Minor deities include:

*Humakt*, god of swords, death and endings; *Mastakos*, Orlanth's charioteer; *Chalana Arroy* the Healer; *Heler* the Rain Bringer; *Voriof* the Shepherd, god of boys; *Odayla* the Hunter; *Gustbran* the Smith; *Drogarsi* the Dancer; *Urox* the Storm Bull, chaos killer; *Vinga* the Adventuress; *Eurmali* the Trickster. Most clans worship their own heroes or local deities, and have *Kolating*, or spirit masters.

Orlanthi law is usually settled in a court, though occasionally there are judicial duels. Judgments include fines and penalties, perhaps including outlawry.

It's said that the Orlanthi spend as much time tending themselves as their cows. Common adornments include bracelets, necklaces, torcs, elaborate buckles, dyed linens, and mirrors.

All adult males are warriors. Housecarls are full time fighters in the service of chiefs, and may fight from chariots. Given the choice of armor or a sword, an Orlanthi would choose the blade without hesitating. Many warriors fight clad only in magic. Most battles are small, and preceded by boasting, threats, and challenges. Heads are a popular trophy.

## Ralios

Trolls live in Halikiv and Guhan, and send caravans of giant insects between the two kingdoms. Dragonewts control Ormsland. There are elves in Ballid and Tarinwood. Dwarfs live in the Nidan Mountains, and trade at Bad Deal.

Safelster is a swirling kaleidoscope of city-states and variants of the Malkioni religion. All practice sorcery, though some worship Orlanth, Arkat, or other gods.

Other Orlanthi tribes live in Vesmonstran, but they are mainly farmers.

The hsunchen live in Telmoria, Vustria, Basim, and Pralorela, as well as within East Ralios. They're hunter-gatherers, and can turn into their totem animals. (The wolf tribes involuntarily become werewolves every Wild-day.)

Incredible beasts can be hunted in Wonderwood.

